COLOR PHOTOS
EDIBLE WILD
MUSHROOMS
Foraging
IN UK & IRELAND
MOBILE APPS, VIDEO COURSES
& OTHER BONUS INCLUDED
SCANNING A QR CODE INSIDE
Lomasi Ahusaka

Edible Wild Mushrooms Foraging

in UK & Ireland

Learn How to Identify Safely and Harvest Nature's Fungal Bounty

Copyright © 2024 by Lomasi Ahusaka

COPYRIGHT & DISCLAIMER

All rights are strictly reserved under international and domestic copyright laws. No portion of this book may be duplicated, disseminated, or distributed in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without prior written permission from the authors. The information provided in this book is based on extensive research and the accumulated expertise of the authors. It is designed to serve as an educational resource and not as a definitive guide to foraging wild mushrooms. While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information herein, variations in local species, environmental conditions, and individual foraging practices mean that outcomes cannot be guaranteed. Foraging for wild mushrooms carries inherent risks, including but not limited to the risk of poisoning, allergic reaction, or other health complications. It is imperative that readers exercise caution, seek additional expert guidance, and obtain proper training before applying the techniques and knowledge contained in this book. Readers are responsible for ensuring their actions comply with local laws and regulations concerning foraging and the use of wild plants. The authors and publisher disclaim any liability for adverse reactions from the use, application, or reliance on the methods and information provided in this book. In no event shall the authors or the publisher be liable for any injury, loss, claim, or any direct, indirect, incidental, punitive, special, or consequential damages of any kind, arising from the use of this book.

By utilizing this book, the reader acknowledges and agrees to this disclaimer and assumes full responsibility for their actions. All photos in this book are from Wikimedia Commons. Credits are available at the following link:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1qzd9LJv1JcVJwn4ygFt5-x2Fy6QQk7EQ/view?usp=drive_link

BONUS

Scan the QR code below to be directed to a web page where you can access 9 incredible bonuses. After providing your email address, you will receive a printable calendar chart, 5 online courses and 6 mobile apps compatible with both Android and iPhone. Your participation and feedback are greatly appreciated!

LINK: https://BookHip.com/GSVJMKP

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 THE MINDSET FOR MUSHROOMS

1.1 What is a Mushroom?
1.2 The Division of Mushrooms
1.3 Conclusion

2 THE KNOW-HOWS OF MUSHROOM IDENTIFICATION

2.1 Parts of the Mushroom
2.2 Environment
2.3 Conclusion

3 LOCALES FOR THE EDIBLE WILD MUSHROOMS

3.1 Forests
3.2 Grasslands
3.3 Roadsides
3.4 How to Find Good Areas to Forage
3.5 Seasonality
3.6 Conclusion

4 THE PREPARATIONS OF THE FORAGER

4.1 Eyes
4.2 Orientation
4.3 Equipment
4.4 Legalities
4.5 The Theft Act
4.6 The CROW Act
4.7 The 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act
4.8 Knives
4.9 Conclusion

5 EDIBLE MUSHROOMS

5.1 Morels
5.2 Semifree Morel
5.3 St. George’s Mushroom
5.4 Summer Truffle
5.5 Chicken of the Woods
5.6 Chanterelle
5.7 Horn of Plenty
5.8 Cauliflower Fungus
5.9 Beefsteak Fungus
5.10 Fairy Ring Champignon
5.11 Tawny Grisette
5.12 Orange Grisette
5.13 Parasol Mushroom
5.14 Shaggy Parasol
5.15 Field Mushroom
5.16 Horse Mushroom
5.17 Wood Mushroom
5.18 The Gypsy
5.19 Charcoal Burner
5.20 Penny Bun
5.21 Summer Bolete
5.22 Chestnut Bolete
5.23 Red Aspen Bolete /Orange Oak Bolete
5.24 Orange Birch Bolete
5.25 Brown Birch Bolete
5.26 Slippery Jack
5.27 Bovine Bolete
5.28 Giant Puffball
5.29 Meadow Puffball
5.30 Deceiver
5.31 Hedgehog Fungus
5.32 Trooping Funnel
5.33 Honey Fungus
5.34 Wood Blewit
5.35 Field Blewit
5.36 Clustered Domecap
5.37 The Miller

5.38 Shaggy Inkcap
5.39 Saffron Milk Cap
5.40 Blushing Mushroom
5.41 The Prince
5.42 Bay Bolete
5.43 Larch Bolete
5.44 Common Puffball
5.45 Trumpet Chanterelle
5.46 Oyster Mushrooms
5.47 Stump Puffball
5.48 Velvet Shank

6 CONCLUSION
7 BONUS
8 APPENDIX

8.1 Foraging Checklist
8.2 Glossary of Terms

INTRODUCTION

There is a certain level of primeval satisfaction when you are able to successfully forage for berries, herbs, and other edible plants in the woods. You may have purchased this book with the intent to learn more about how to properly forage in the woods and fields around you for the sustainable produce that nature has provided. While there is certainly a vast amount of greenery from which you could make your choices, not all plants are edible and if you are unguided as to how to properly tell apart edible from inedible plants, you may find yourself in a pickle. Some plants are truly edible, while others have parts that are edible while the other parts may be toxic to consume. This book serves to be a guide by which you will be able to safely forage for sustainable and ecologically friendly produce and live off the land successfully. You would be able to save on grocery bills since you would be able to source your produce from nature itself.

1 THE MINDSET FOR MUSHROOMS

One would either love to eat mushrooms or absolutely abhor the idea of their consumption. Where one person would consider the earthiness and savoury qualities that certain types of mushrooms may impart into a dish, another person would more likely associate mushrooms with the slightly musty, slimy texture that may be present in another dish. While it would be improper to categorize the mindset of a person into these two notions, it remains a main thought for consideration, in that some cultures are more accustomed to the consumption of mushrooms, whereas other cultures have never thought about the consumption of the mushrooms, and either characteristic has been passed down through the generations. The British citizen for the main part is accustomed to the consumption of a variety of mushrooms, as the British Isles provide a suitable environment wherein one can encounter a variety of mushrooms, a few steps into the woodlands nearest their home. One can say that there is a type of fulfilment that can be derived when one successfully explores their local woodlands and encounters an edible mushroom. Perhaps this can be attributed to the need to explore the unknown and come back with the treasures that can be found, although in this case, one often overlooks the presence of the woodlands in their area as a viable source of produce for wild plants and mushrooms that are just as edible as their domesticated counterparts.

The Brit would take well to the need to forage amongst the growths in the forests, as it can be considered as a form of recreational exploration in the search for the wild edibles that sprout amongst the leaves and detritus left by the forest canopy. This knack for exploration would serve the Brit well, as this would lead them to places hitherto untold, to find what can be found in unusual places, and more often than not, this may yield rarities such as edible wild mushrooms that are rarely found anywhere else, for one.

Historically, one can argue that humanity evolved from the hunter-gatherers into the more agrarian communities that are observed today. In the interim however, the earlier humans also augmented their food supplies with those that can be found in the forests. This leads to centuries worth of wood lore that help a person determine which items in the forest are edible, curative or

should be avoided at all. This would include the local delicacies such as the mushrooms, with which humanity has developed a love-hate relationship. Despite this, there is a sense of elation felt when one gradually discovers a plethora of edible fungi that one can harvest to ensure that they have a steady supply of additional food that can be obtained for free. It would be a surprise then, that the refinement of woodlore into the detailed breakdown on how to forage properly would start from the 1980’s. There was minimal information to help would be foragers find out which species are edible or not, only the information needed to tell a person which mushroom was which.

Those who came from Continental Europe however, find that they are able to more easily identify edible mushrooms as they have been accustomed to the consumption of mushrooms in their culture. That said, regardless of the skill level of the forager, mushrooms can easily be mistaken for other species in the same genera, this means that the forager would need to carefully scrutinize each mushroom to ascertain that this is the specific species that would be best for human consumption. One this has been accomplished, the forager would be able to continue with their harvest.

1.1 What is a Mushroom?

The mushroom is but one part of an entire kingdom of species that include other types of fungi such as mould and toadstools, where the latter are often used in reference to mushrooms that are poisonous. What makes the mushroom different from plants is that mushrooms do not have the ability to produce their own food as they lack chlorophyll, the substance responsible for the conversion of sunlight into glucose to provide the nutrition that the plant needs to thrive. Mushrooms and other types of fungi bear some similarities to animals in that they obtain their sustenance from other species, in the same way that humans and other animals consume meat and other plants to obtain the nutrients needed to sustain life. This means that if the forager does encounter a mushroom that is coloured green, this is not chlorophyll but simply another compound that mimics the appearance, but not the function of the substance. The mushroom is a member of the Fungi Kingdom, where it is botanically defined as the edible, fruiting bodies of a network of fungi. Fruiting in this context, does not refer to any similarities to the fruits that grow on plants, rather this is the body through which the fungi are able to disperse spores through which it propagates. To contrast this from a toadstool, despite the archaic application of the term, is that the term too is used to refer to mushrooms with bodies that are inedible or poisonous. It would be remiss to overlook a discussion on the distribution of spores as this is a crucial factor that helps the forager determine where to look for a particular mushroom that is desired, and when to look for the mushroom, as well as other species that may grow alongside the spores that have been dispersed by the mushroom once it has fully matured. Here, there are some similarities with regards to the reproduction of the fungus, as once the spores have been dispersed, they require unique conditions to coincide to ensure that the environment that they are in becomes conducive to their growth. There is a question of competition with other mushroom species that already have a network of mycelia – a network of fine fibres referred to as hyphae – that spread themselves underneath the soil or their chosen substrate and become the source from which the mushrooms themselves begin to sprout. Once it has established its presence in the substrate on which it thrives, it then has to find a set of mycelia that are of the same species for it to fully form the

network on which mushrooms are able to make their appearance. This enables the fungus to compete against other species of fungi in the area, gather more food, and let the mushroom bodies sprout forth in the right circumstances.

1.2 The Division of Mushrooms

Mushrooms are a very diverse group of fungi, as they number among the hundreds if not thousands, where only a few species have been given the unique distinction that they are edible in some form. The fungi, collectively, are divided into two distinct groups: the ***Ascomycetes*** and the ***Basidiomycetes***.

The ***Ascomycetes*** are a group of fungi whose spores are dispersed through the actions of the wind. Familiar species encountered under this group include the cup fungi, as well as the common morel and the *Gynomitra esculenta*. The method of distribution of the spores is noteworthy for the forager, for instance, when one wishes to acquire more morels for a creamy morel sauce, one would have to look downwind from where the other morels are found to properly locate a reasonable supply of morels from which one can forage from. Another example of the *Ascomycetes* fungi is the summer truffle (*Tuber aestivum*), a lighter version of the more gourmet black and white truffles found in continental Europe, though in this case, truffles have a tendency to develop mycorrhizal relationships with certain trees- that is to say, it only grows in areas where particular trees may be found.

The ***Basidiomycetes*** group however, is the larger group and has two more divisions beneath its categorization. It is further divided into the ***Agaric*** and ***Boletus*** families. Each subdivision merits a thorough discussion for the forager to better understand the characteristics that would help in the proper identification of the mushroom. The *Agaric* family of mushrooms are gilled mushrooms, which means that if the forager turns over a mushroom to view the underside of the cap, they can expect to see vertical ridges that emanate from a point in the cap. These are the gills through which the spores of the mushroom are dispersed. The mushroom body can grow from a volval bag, which is an egg-shaped receptacle from which the stalk of the mushroom sprouts. This is a crucial characteristic to help identify the mushroom, as in its inception, the *Agaric* family of mushrooms are initially covered by a universal veil, which conceals the gills of the mushroom, as well as a partial veil underneath that covers the gills from within the mushroom body. As the

mushroom begins to grow, the universal veil that once covered the mushrooms is ruptured, and this leaves behind the volval bag, as well as fragments on the cap of the mushroom. In the later stages, the partial veil too, ruptures and is left as a remnant on the stalk of the mushroom, a ring of tissue that resembles a skirt. These characteristics, the development and presence of a volval bag at the base of the mushroom and the presence of the ring that circles the middle of the mushroom stem, should indicate to the forager that additional care should be taken when this mushroom is encountered as there is an extremely high likelihood that these mushrooms are poisonous. The *Amanita*, deadliest of the mushroom species, grows in this manner.

The *Boletus* family of mushrooms, if one encounters a member of this family of mushrooms, would have an underside riddled with tubes and pores of various sizes and colours, rather than the gilled undersides of the *Agaric* mushrooms. The body of the mushroom is quite fleshy and decays readily, which are characteristics that distinguish this type of mushroom from the Polypore mushrooms. The colour of the mushroom is the most distinctive characteristic that can help one identify the specific mushroom that has been picked. Of all the species that are encountered, the forager would be most familiar with the Porcini mushroom, otherwise known as the Ceps mushroom.

There is a third family of mushrooms known as the ***Aphyllophorales***, characterized by mushrooms that are irregularly shaped. The Polypore mushrooms number among the members of this family of mushrooms, as well as the chanterelle, the delicate mushroom favoured by many an epicurean for its robust flavour profile. Other notable members of this species include the Hedgehog mushroom, its name derived from the tiny spines that it has on its underside rather than gills; and the Cauliflower mushroom, an oddly shaped mushroom that delivers a culinary punch of flavour once utilized to its fullest extent. The beefsteak fungus and the chicken-of-the-woods mushrooms are other polypore mushrooms that are noteworthy, not only because of their shape and flavour, but also because of their status as delectable edibles that belong to this family of mushrooms. The beefsteak fungus however, is endemic to the United States, and it is highly unlikely that a forager in the British Isles would be able to come across one in their exploration of their environment.

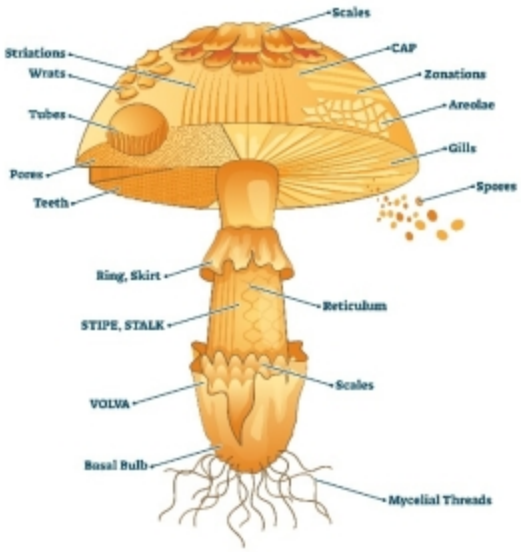
1.3 Conclusion

From this initial foray into the mushroom itself, one can tell that mushrooms are the type of food that polarizes a person as to whether they love or hate it. Regardless, the presence of the mushroom in the wild is heavily dependent upon chance and conditions that lead to the growth of the mushroom. Naturally, one cannot encounter mushroom in areas that are bereft of precipitation, thus one would find them at home in areas that regularly encounter moisture, a condition that Great Britain and Ireland are very conducive towards. That aside, mushroom identification is a key takeaway from this chapter and will be discussed in further detail in the succeeding chapter as it is the main means by which the forager would be able to properly identify the mushroom that has been foraged. Given the potentially fatal effects that the improper identification of a mushroom can cause, the forager should not skip the next chapter.

2 THE KNOW-HOWS OF MUSHROOM IDENTIFICATION

A veteran forager cannot forego the importance of the proper identification of a species, whether it be plant or fungi. The difference is that, where the forager may apply the universal edibility test to ascertain that a particular wild plant is edible and fit for human consumption, there is no such test that corresponds to the identification of wild mushrooms. This means that the forager would have to be highly reliant on the identification of the characteristics that identify a mushroom as one that belongs to a known edible species. There is very little margin for error with regards to the symptoms of a mushroom that is erroneously identified as edible when it is poisonous, hence to avoid a hefty hospital bill, it would be more prudent on the part of the forager to identify the mushroom correctly.

2.1 Parts of the Mushroom



The forager would have to be familiar with the parts of the mushroom as each part differs from mushroom to mushroom, even if they are within the same genera. The mushrooms may have different qualities that help the forager distinguish one species from another species in the same genera, or even from mushrooms of other species that are almost similar in appearance. Every aspect of the mushroom must be taken into account, for the mushroom to be properly identified.

Caps

The mushroom caps are the most visible part of the mushroom to the forager. There are a few guide questions that the forager can ask themselves to ensure that all the features of the cap have been thoroughly covered.

- **What colour is the cap?** – this is the more apparent question as some edible mushrooms have distinct colourations that enable easier identification, though this should not be used as the sole parameter to ascertain if a mushroom is edible, as other species have been known to bear similar appearances to edible mushrooms.
- **What size is the cap?** – in the determination of the size of the cap, it is crucial to take into consideration the minimum and maximum

diameters of the cap. If a ruler is a bit unwieldy to carry alongside the tools, one can use a tape measure, or even a coin to ensure that the cap is able to scale with a particular object. Alternatively, one can also take a picture of the mushroom with an object to help scale it for comparison.

- **What shape is the cap?** – mushroom caps come in a variety of appearances, where one would have to consider any distinct shapes that the mushroom cap is. Oyster mushrooms, as well as other species do not have a specific cap shape and are considered to be irregularly shaped mushrooms.
- **What does the surface of the cap feel like?** – there are some mushroom caps that are dry to the touch, and there are also some mushroom caps that are slimy to the touch. One would also have to consider if the cap is smooth, rough, scaly, or shiny.
- **Are there other objects on the cap?** – in the previous chapter, the book has mentioned that some members of the *Agaricus* family of mushrooms have developed with a universal veil as its cover. Once the mushroom matures, the veil ruptures and some remnants adhere to the cap. These are remnants of the universal veil, and are indicators that the mushroom might be poisonous. However, one would also have to consider that the veil remnants may be readily washed off by the rain, that can lead to erroneous identifications. If there are remnants, describe the colour of the warts/debris, and how are they distributed on the cap?

Term	Detail	Description
Convex	Shape	The cap of the mushroom is rounded, or shaped like a dome.
Conical	Shape	The cap of the mushroom tapers to a central point, where it resembles an upside-down ice cream cone, though some mushrooms may taper to a rounded point, rather than an angular point.

Term	Detail	Description
Funnel-Shaped	Shape	The cap of the mushroom has an indentation in the centre, which resembles a depression in the cap.
Folded	Shape	The cap of the mushroom resembles a honeycomb, or has folds that resemble a brain.
Umbonate	Shape	The cap of the mushroom has a raised point in the centre of the cap.
Loose Scales	Texture	The scales on the caps of the mushroom are quite loose.
Scaly	Texture	The cap of the mushroom has scales that adhere closely to the skin of the mushroom cap.
Shaggy	Texture	The cap of the mushroom has long, fibrous scales that give it an appearance similar to a mop.
Sticky	Texture	The cap of the mushroom has a gelatinous substance that sticks to the fingers if touched.
Translucently Striate	Appearance	The gills on the underside of the mushroom may be seen through the cap if a light is shone underneath it.
Striate	Appearance	The cap has a lightly grooved appearance.
Concentric Zones	Appearance	The cap stems from a centre from which it expands in irregular shapes.
Margin	Appearance	The margins of the cap roll inwards to the underside of the cap.

Spore-Bearing Structures

This is in reference to the structures found on the underside of the caps. In the previous chapter, it was narrated that there are mushrooms that have gills on the underside, and there are species of mushrooms that have tubes, pores or spines as an alternative means to carry their spores for distribution upon the full maturation of the mushroom. There are however, deceptive structures that one must be aware of. **True gills** on the underside of a mushroom are individual structures, that resemble ridges or plates underneath the mushroom cap, the forager would find these in most cultivated mushrooms such as the Oyster Mushroom. **False gills** on the other hand, are not individualized structures on the underside of the cap, but rather folds. One does not need to know what pores resemble, whereas tube like structures make the underside of the mushroom resemble a sponge; whereas teeth on the underside of the cap resemble miniature spikes. Some guide questions that the forager can think of with regards to the identification of the gills, if present would be:

- **Are the gills widely or densely spaced? –** the gills on the underside of the mushroom may be tightly packed, where they are crowded against each other; or loose, where there are wide spaces between each gill.
- **Are the gills thick or thin? –** this would not warrant further elaboration, simply determine if the gills have a certain thickness or are quite thin.
- **Are the gills forked? –** this entails that the gills terminate into two or three prongs. One cannot immediately determine this with the unaided eye, hence the use of a magnifying glass to ascertain the presence of this characteristic.
- **Do the gills join each other? –** the random arrangement and entwinement of gills is referred to as intervein. This requires the use of a magnifying glass to see if the gills join up with each other at a certain point in the cap.
- **Are the gills brittle or flexible?** – perhaps a different part, one can expect to do this test with the entire cap, as some mushrooms are so brittle that the light use of force can break the mushroom apart, whereas some, such as the shiitake mushroom, are able to withstand certain thresholds of torque and force exerted on them.

- **Are the gills greasy? –** This is more of a textural concern, and one would have to determine if the gills are covered by either slime, or a membrane that makes them feel that they are covered in a gelatinous substance.
- **How are the gills attached to the stem?** – There are certain terms that are to be used in the identification of attachment of the gills, and these will be individually elaborated. One would have to see if the gills do or do not attach to the stem.

Term	Detail	Description
Free	Attachment	The gills of the mushrooms stop short or do not approach the point where the stem meets the cap of the mushroom.
Adnexed	Attachment	The gills of the mushroom narrowly attach to the stem of the mushroom. This means that the gills may be broad from the margins of the cap, where they gradually taper to a narrow point where the gills attach to the stem of the mushroom.
Adnate	Attachment	The gills of the mushroom are attached to the stem, broadly. In contrast with the adnexed attachment, this type of attachment means that the gills to not taper to a point but simply attach to the stem of the mushroom.
Decurrent	Attachment	The gills of the mushroom run downwards into the stem itself.
Sinuate Notched	Attachment	The gills of the mushroom curve inwards and form a notch prior to their attachment to the stem of the mushroom.
Notched	Attachment	The gills of the mushroom become indented where the cap attaches to the stem.

Term	Detail	Description
Equal	Appearance	All of the gills on the underside of the mushroom are equal in length.
Varying Lengths	Appearance	The gills of the mushroom differ in their lengths.
Forked	Appearance	The gills of the mushroom split into two once they approach the margin of the cap.
Crowded	Appearance	The gills of the mushroom are tightly or densely packed.
Widely Spaced	Appearance	The gills of the mushroom have wide spaces in-between each gill.
Joined to Collar	Appearance	The gills of the mushroom are widely spaced and connect to a circle that surrounds the point where the cap attaches to the stem.
Radiating	Appearance	The gills of the mushroom stem from or emanate from a point in the cap. This is usually found in irregularly shaped mushrooms.
Spines	Appearance	There are no gills, but rather spines or teeth, that are found on the underside of the mushroom.
Pores	Appearance	The underside of the mushroom resembles a sponge, where instead of gills, there are tubes that lead to pores that serve as the opening through which spores are dispersed.
Maze-Like Pores	Appearance	These are branching pores that interconnect or intervein with one another, and are usually covered by a hymenium- a membrane.
Stems		

Once the forager is done with the examination of the cap and its underside, the next step in the identification process would be the identification of the stem, which comes in two different sections. The first part would entail the identification of the stem by its appearance, and the other part would involve the dissection of the stem with a small blade to determine if it is hollow or not, or if the insides are mottled or solidly coloured. There are also several factors to consider with regards to the stem, as it is essential to determine if a stem has a veil or not. The presence of a veil or its remnants in the stem would place it reasonably in the *Agaricus* family of mushrooms, with which the forager should immediately discard. If the stem is not visible, it is possible to dig up the mushroom carefully to see the base of the stem. If there is a volvar bag, the mushroom should be discarded as this is a certainty that the mushroom is poisonous. Regardless of the mushroom, the forager should always dig carefully to ensure that the mycelia remain undamaged.

The forager may also dissect the mushroom, as mentioned earlier, to determine if the stem is hollow, or solid. If the stem is solid, it can be determined if the interior is mottled, or a singular colour, although some species change colour once they are exposed to the air. It is this characteristic that one should keep an eye out for in the identification of mushrooms that are prone to colour changes.

Term	Detail	Description
Rooting	Appearance	While the fungus cannot take root, this means that the stem of the fungus takes a root like appearance where it anchors itself to the soil. This would allow it to resemble a sprout.
Clavate	Appearance	The stem of the mushroom terminates in a swollen-base that resembles a club.
Tapered to Base	Appearance	The stem of the mushroom starts as broad, before it begins to narrow down to a slender base.

Term	Detail	Description
Stem and Ring	Appearance	There is a ring of tissue around the stem, and this mushroom should be discarded.

There are some questions that can be used as a guide to further identify the **Stem:**

- **Does the stem have any other marks or identifiers on it?** Some stems have striations or lines on them that are called reticulations, whereas others may have that ring of tissue that otherwise identifies them as possibly poisonous species.
- **Is the stem fibrous in texture?** Ordinarily, it is expected that stems would have to be chewed on to determine if it is fibrous enough (like the shitake mushroom), however, one can determine from touch alone if the stem contains numerous fibres that comprise its structure.
- **Is the mushroom, or the stem of the mushroom tough or brittle?** There would need to be some force exerted to determine the answer for this question as some mushrooms tend to break easily, whereas others are more flexible and durable when thrown at a hard surface. It is advised to wear gloves if this is done to ensure that any exudates the mushroom may have do not come into contact with bare skin to reduce the incidence of irritations and/or stains on the hands.
- **What shape is the mushroom?** This has been mentioned in the table of this section, and from there, one can determine the type of stalk that the mushroom has. Some mushrooms have a cylindrical stalk, whereas some have a clubbed base, where the base of the mushroom terminates into a clubbed shape. Some mushrooms are attached to narrow and slender stalks that resemble spindles. One would also have to consider if the mushroom tapers in shape, whether it starts of as narrow, then gradually broadens; or if the whole stem is quite large to begin with. It must be recalled that mushrooms do not have roots, as they are not plants, and if the stem resembles a carrot for one, then these are just stems that have really integrated themselves more into the ground on which they grow on.

- **Does the mushroom have a ring?** Earlier in this book, there was a short discussion on the *Amanita* family of mushrooms wherein it counts among its members among the deadliest type of fungi. One of the typical indicators that a mushroom belongs to this family is the presence of the ring on the stalk, a remnant of the partial veil that once covered the immature gills of the mushroom; and the presence of cap debris – the remnants too, of the universal veil that once encapsulated the entire mushroom. Now the question that needs to be asked here is whether or not the ring around the stem disappears? If it does, it is referred to as an ephemeral ring, whereas if it endures, these are known as persistent rings. Further guides may include:
    - **The diameter of the ring.**
    - **The attachment of the ring.** The ring may move up and down the shaft, hence it is called movable; whereas, if the ring is stationary, it is called as an immovable ring.
    - **The location of the ring.** If the ring is attached at the top of the stem, it is referred to as a superior ring; those found at the middle of the stem are called the median ring; whereas those at the bottom of the stem are referred to as the inferior ring. If the rings are attached to the stem, these are called a sheathing ring, due to its resemblance to a sheath.
    - **Double Rings** are a term used to refer to two rings attached one inside of the other, similar to how rings appear on a planet. One ring is inset into another, and both are attached to the mushroom. One would have to keep a keen eye on this. This may also be used for rings that face two different directions, or even two rings located at different parts of the stem concurrently.

The forager would have to exercise care when the mushroom is handled for identification to ensure that no identifiers would be disintegrated or moved from the body of the mushroom.

Spore Prints

Another method by which a forager may be able to identify a mushroom is through the use of the spore print that it generates over the span of a day. There are certain preparations that must be undertaken to do this, and one would have to carefully separate the mushroom that requires identification

from the others to ensure that there are no mix-ups. The mushroom to be identified should be set aside. To take the spore print, what needs to be done are these steps:

- Incise into the stem, as close to the point where the stem attaches to the cap as possible.
- Place the cap onto a smooth, level surface covered with a sheet of paper. There are times though when it is recommended to have a sheet of both white and black paper that overlap each other, with half of the cap located on each sheet. This is because some mushrooms release white or light-coloured spore prints that would not be visible on the white paper, but contrast on the black.
- Leave a single drop of water on the mushroom cap, and cover with an upside-down bowl. This helps remove the interference of air and other factors that may disrupt the spore print pattern.
- Leave overnight or at least a few hours. Lift the mushroom cap and one would be able to appreciate the colour of the spore print left on the sheets of paper underneath the mushroom cap.

Throughout this guide, there will be information provided on the colour of the spore print that each type of edible mushroom would exude once the spore print is taken. There are other smaller characteristics that would also aid the forager in the identification of the mushroom. These include:

- **Volva –** the sac from which the more poisonous *Amanita* mushrooms develop from. If this is present, there is a high likelihood that the mushroom is poisonous, and should be discarded.
- **Texture –** this time, the texture refers to the flesh of the mushroom, rather than its stem. If the flesh is torn apart, does it separate into little grains? If it does, this is a granular texture; whereas if the flesh separates into miniature fibres, this is called a fibrous texture.
- **Scent –** while it is sometimes unreliable, and may be inadvisable due to the potential for the inhalation of fungal spores into the respiratory system, if done correctly, this can help identify the mushroom. Some mushrooms may have a scent reminiscent to that of seafood or maple syrup, and these would help identify it as a possibly edible species. Some mushrooms are simply repugnant in their scent, and while not

necessarily poisonous, it would certainly make one identify it by scent, to determine its edibility or lack thereof.

- **Taste –** this step is only recommended for those who are veteran foragers, as some mushrooms have a near-instantaneous effect on the body even when the flesh comes into the briefest of contacts with the body. However, with the presence of the Russula family of mushrooms, of which many species are edible, this can be highly useful to determine if the mushroom is a Shrimp or a Crab Russula, as the flesh of the mushroom is not only highly brittle, but has a flavour evocative of the shellfish that they are named after.
    - The Death Cap and Destroying Angels, are mushrooms that should never be tasted, and are extremely poisonous. The forager should do well to avoid their distinctive bright red caps.
    - Brown Rollrim and Angel's Wings Mushrooms are still poisonous mushrooms, but may be tasted in limited quantities, as the poison only takes effect if the mushrooms are consumed in large quantities, or in high frequencies.
    - The Sickener is a mushroom that should not be tasted, even if it is not quite poisonous as the flesh of the mushroom can induce nausea, though the duration of the symptom is brief. Still, it is not a good sensation to feel, particularly if one has a naturally queasy disposition.
    - Other mushrooms may be safely eaten such as the Chanterelles, and the Hen of the Woods Mushrooms.

2.2 Environment

Mushrooms, if one cannot tell immediately, are highly selective in the habitat wherein which they thrive. They cannot thrive in areas that have little to no trees, and in areas that lack moisture. Given that this book is set in the British Isles, one can be assured then, that the mushrooms in this book are found in areas that are sufficiently moist enough to ensure their presence. While one can identify the mushroom by its parts and looks from the previous section of this chapter, the knowledge of where the mushroom grows would also help in its swift identification and location. The morels for instance, may be found downwind of other morels, based on the pattern of spore distribution by its fruiting body. That said, there are a few questions that can be asked with regards to the environment of a mushroom:

- **Where did the mushroom grow?** Some mushrooms only grow on or around specific types of trees, with which it has developed a **mycorrhizal** relationship. This may help narrow down the mushroom that the forager had picked.
- **What was the mushroom growing in?** This is in reference to the material in which the mushroom grows, as some species prefer to grow in the leaf mulch created from the fallen leaves of certain trees; other mushrooms prefer to sprout in dung; or others grow in fairy rings concealed beneath the soil; or other hardier species may be found within the wood of a decayed tree. It is also possible to encounter mushrooms that grow on a tree that is still alive, and this should be noted by the forager.
- **What tree did the mushroom grow on?** There are species of mushrooms that only grow in or around coniferous forests, and mushrooms that grow in or around deciduous forests, or trees of a specific species. It is a prudent step to identify the tree, and then the mushroom may be identified as well.
- **What was around the mushroom?** There are mushrooms that grow in or around certain plants, and these helps narrow down the mushroom, that the forager may swiftly identify the mushroom that was picked.

- **What is the soil type?** This is not the kind of information that is readily available to the forager, but would be useful to have. There are mushrooms that thrive in sandy soil, and some that thrive in the alkaline environments. Sandy soils tend to be acidic, whereas alkaline soils are chalky in nature, which should give a general direction as to what soils are present in the immediate vicinity. There are mushrooms deemed to be halophilic, in that they have adapted to survive in a saline environment.

Hints

One would be absolutely remiss in their ability to forage if the sights are kept for mushrooms close to the ground, that the forager would miss the mushrooms that thrive in the air. On the higher parts of the trees, where they attach to the bark, it is possible for one to find the Chicken-of-the-Woods Mushrooms, and the Jelly Ear Mushrooms among other species; and a little effort underneath the tree would yield mushrooms such as the Summer Truffle or the Chestnut Bolete. Chanterelles and the Hedgehog Mushroom may be found nestled in the detritus of leaves that have fallen around the tree when it sheds its leaves. Grassy areas are sufficiently wide enough for mushrooms that thrive in fairy rings to grow in, and one can find the Fairy Ring Champignon and the Parasol Mushrooms in this environment; whereas Wild Oyster Mushrooms may be found in trees that are decayed or about to perish. This information should be taken into consideration with the seasonality of the mushroom, as all of the information mentioned in this paragraph, may be utilized by the forager in the onset of the fall months in and around hardwood forests. The Coniferous forests when the forager explores in the autumn months, yield a different variety of places wherein one could readily forage for the precious morsels. If one is prudent enough or careful enough, the enigmatic Cauliflower mushroom may be found attached to tree stumps, wherein the stumps are its preferred substrate, though this is not the only species limited to the stump. The fallen needles of the conifers tend to accumulate at the forest floors, and one would be able to encounter the Horn of Plenty Mushroom, as well as the Red-Staining Mushroom arranged in rings within the scattered needles. Two-Needled Pines such as the Scots pine, have damp areas that are conducive to the growth of the Saffron Milk Cap Mushroom, whereas at the base of the pine trees, one would find Trumpet Chanterelles,

the Hedgehog Mushroom and the Bovine Bolete. The rich soil on which the conifers grow yield the Wood Mushroom in plentiful supply, occasionally arranged in fairy rings.

Coniferous and Hardwood Forests may come together, and these are referred to collectively as a Mixed Forest. For foragers who find themselves situated in this type of locale, there would be several areas conducive to their search for edible wild mushrooms. The paths on the woodlands are often home to the popular Cep mushrooms, better known as the Porcini Mushroom to those familiar with Italian cuisine. An eagle-eyed forager would also be able to locate the Deceiver mushroom nestled among the leaves that line the pathways. The presence of fallen tree trunks would yield the Trumpet Chanterelles and the Oyster Mushrooms, though for the latter, there has to be a distinction made as this is the wilder variety, not the cultivated variety one may encounter at the greengrocers. The Hedgehog Mushroom too, may be found in this type of forest, where it prefers to grow in the ditches and banks, nestled in the moss. The trunks of the oak trees in this forest would yield the Beefsteak Mushroom, as well as the Jelly Ear Mushroom. The combination of leaves from both the deciduous and evergreen trees yields a substrate that favours the growth of the Wood Blewit as well as the Shaggy parasol mushroom. Another place where the forager may search for mushrooms are the pasturelands in autumn. Cows and horses often graze in wide fields, and because of their tendency to graze in these lands, there is ample opportunity for mushrooms to sprout in this type of environment. Where the pastureland begins to edge toward the forests, the forager would want to keep a keen eye for the puffball, a mushroom immense enough that one really cannot overlook it due to its size. The Common puffball tends to grow in clusters in a fairy ring. On the way to the edges, the wide-open spaces of the pasture may yield the Field Blewit and the Field Mushroom, both carefully arranged in a fairy ring, though not necessarily together. In the areas of the pasturelands where horses graze, the forager may, appropriately enough, find the Horse mushroom, carefully arrayed on the fairy ring pattern from which it emerges. Aside from the Horse Mushroom, the forager may also find Meadow Puffballs, and the Parasol Mushrooms. On the borders of the pasture where it nears the hardwood forests, on hardwood trees that are in various stages of decay, one may find the Honey Fungus, which tends to

grow around the trunk in large clusters. One may also find, on areas of pastureland that have undergone disturbance, such as from the hooves of cows and horses, an area conducive for the growth of the Giant Puffball, a mushroom the size of a football, that one cannot simply overlook. If it is not in the area recommended, the forager may be advised to search in areas where nettles grow, as it has shown a particular predilection to thrive amongst these plants. The Autumn Parklands are great places from which one would be able to forage a plethora of edible mushrooms, though it would be best prior to the act, that one seeks permission from the needed authorities of the area. There are certain legalities that are involved as with the pasturelands and forests if they are in a protected area, or are in private property, and thus one would need to fulfil the requisite of permission to be able to safely forage, even if it is simply to pick a mushroom. That said, one would have to ask for permission before one can forage from a parkland. That aside, once one gets the necessary permission and wades into the dense undergrowth in the parklands, keep an eye out for the small, white orbs that denote the presence of the Meadow Puffball, the smaller relative of the Giant Puffball previously mentioned in the Pasturelands section. If the forager is fortunate enough to be near a golf course, the Field Blewit would be a worthy addition to their pantry of wild mushrooms, though one may also encounter the Parasol mushrooms as well. In areas where the soil has been disturbed, the Clustered Domecap makes its presence known by the caps that grow in, aptly enough, dense clusters. The Giant Puffball may also be encountered here, as well as the Lawyer’s Wig Mushroom. In trees that are in a state of decay, one may encounter the Wild Oyster Mushroom, particularly on hardwood trees; and the Stump Puffball which grows in clusters on the bark of these trees. Larch boletes, are a mushroom that one may encounter among the Larch trees, nestled in, or growing on the dense leaf mulch that resulted from the fallen leaves of the tree.

2.3 Conclusion

The identification of an edible mushroom species is not easily learned, as it requires a processual method to ensure that what has been picked is edible and does not send one to the infirmary. That said, once one has accustomed themselves to the steps needed to properly identify the mushroom, it becomes possible to do this by rote, often enough that the application of the aforementioned steps would be second nature. The steps may be numerous and tedious, but it is better to be careful and sure in the identification rather than spend some time in the hospital or attain permanent damage simply because one rushed through the process. That in mind, it becomes possible now to find mushrooms that are readily identifiable by sight, smell, or through the exhibition of particular characteristics such as brittleness and colour variance once exposed to air. The locations of some mushrooms would also give sufficient clues as to where the forager can expect to find these mushrooms in the wild. Despite the amount of effort needed to properly identify them, once picked, the flavour makes it well worth the effort expended to identify and locate them.

3 LOCALES FOR THE EDIBLE WILD MUSHROOMS

The locations provided for in the previous chapter can be considered as a general guide, but as Great Britain and Ireland are among the largest islands in Europe, one would have to require specifics to be able to search for mushrooms that are present in their particular locale. However, despite the presence of specific information, there is no specific pattern through which fungi may be distributed. How is this? While there may be a coniferous forest for example, nearby, there would be some areas that just teem with mushrooms of all sorts, and one can easily take their pick. There can be the reasonable assumption that other similar areas in the woodlands would have the same density of the mushrooms, but this may not necessarily be the case. The distribution of the mushrooms can be a bit fickle, but one does not really have a say in how the spores of wild mushrooms are distributed. It just does not work that way. In this chapter then, the locales in which Edible Wild Mushrooms may be found amongst the British Isles would be explored further.

3.1 Forests

Prior to the advent of civilization, Continental Europe was heavily forested, and the woodlands themselves have been populated with their own specific types of fungi. By the time the Romans had occupied the British Isles, the primeval forests that once populated Great Britain and Ireland had to make way for the agricultural methods and practices that the Romans favoured, to the point that these forests only formed small pockets of woodland that remain unspoiled. It is these remnants of the ancient forest where the forager would be able to find a plethora of fungal species. However, in areas of replanted forests, one would also find a greater variety of fungi. A rule of thumb is that, the longer a forest has been replanted, the greater variety of mushrooms can be found. One would also have to account however, for the types of trees that make up the forest. There are some trees however, that never develop a mycorrhizal relationship with mushrooms that tend to grow large. Therefore, one would not expect to find mushrooms among sycamores, elms, ash, box, horse chestnut, elder and yew trees.

The Weald is a forested area located in southeastern part of England, between the North and South Downs. It should be noted that the southeastern portion of England is one that has a relatively high population density, and one can have the assumption that this is an area where the forests would be cut down. This would not be the case in the Weald, as it remains one of the more heavily forested parts of England despite its location in a densely populated region of the country. One can expect that the soil type of the Weald is acidic due to its mostly limestone composition, and this acidic soil in turn, gives rise to the heaths, the largest area of which is near the Ashdown Forest.

One may find that the Weald starts in an area near Guildford, where it passes through Surrey and Sussex, and ends at Hastings, at which point the higher part of the Weald terminates at the sea. The counties of Sussex and Kent remain as the more heavily forested parts of England and are among the more conducive places where the forager would find a suitable array of fungi to whet their appetites with. Not all wooded areas are suitable for the mushroom forager, as those woodlands populated by brambles make for

poor areas in which to forage. While accessibility and safety are the main issues in these types of woodlands, one would also have to contend with the fact that there are simply too few fungi, if any, to make it worth one's while to actually forage amongst the thorns. Ideally, the woodlands that make for the ideal grounds for the forager should have the aforementioned trees, as well as a variety of plants that grow low to the ground, and are populated by mosses, and enriched by the leaves that fall from the trees. Due to the effects of the Industrial Revolution and the subsequent deforestation and reforestation efforts, there may be wooded areas where there are only one to two types of trees. While not necessarily a negative, this may lead to a dearth of a variety of fungi, but an abundance of species that may have developed a mycorrhizal relationship with the trees that were planted there. A great type of woodland would be one where there are a mix of trees, both coniferous and hardwood trees, as well as the presence of a few, open, grassy areas and wide paths full of grass. If one would go back to the environment mentioned in the previous chapter, it would be apparent that with a combination of these areas, one can expect to find a cornucopia of mushrooms. It is also ideal if the mixed woodlands are adjacent to a pastureland or have fields that are adjacent to it. Below is a summary of what types of fungi may be found in each type of woodland.

All Types of Woodlands

All Types of Woodlands

- **Bay Boletes**
- **Blushing Wood Mushroom**
- **Butter Cap**
- **Chanterelles**
- **Common Earthball**
- **Common Puffball**
- **Hedgehog Mushroom**
- **Ochre Brittlegill**
- **Shaggy Parasol**
- **Spotted Toughshank**
- **Stump Puffball**
- **Sulphur Taft**
- **The Deceiver Mushroom**
- Clouded Funnel
- Common Stinkhorn
- Destroying Angel
- False Deathcap
- Grey-Spotted Amanita
- Honey Fungus of the *Armillaria* species
- Sweetbread Mushrooms
- Tawny Funnel
- The Blusher
- Trooping Funnel
- Turkeytail
- Wood Blewit

Coniferous Forests

- **Conifer Tuft**
- **False Chanterelle**
- **Plums and Custard**
- **Red Hot Milkcap**
- Slimy Spike
- Terracotta Hedgehog Mushroom
- Winter Chanterelle

Pine Trees

- **Cauliflower Mushroom**
- **Copper Spike**
- **Humpback Brittlegill**
- **Jersey Cow Bolete**
- **Pine Bolete**
- Primrose Brittlegill
- Rosy Spike
- Saffron Milkcap
- Slippery Jack
- The Sickener

Deciduous Forests

All Types of Woodlands

- **Blackening Brittlegill**
- **Brown Rollrim**
- **Dryad's Saddle**
- **Matte Bolete**
- Shaggy Scaly Cap
- Sheathed Woodtuft
- Suede Bolete
- The Charcoal Burner

Oak Trees

- **Beefsteak Fungus**
- **Deathcap**
- **Oak Bolete**
- Oak Milkcap
- Orange Oak Bolete
- Penny Bun

Beech Trees

- **Amethyst Deceiver**
- **Beech Milkcap**
- **Beechwood Sickener**
- **Deathcap**
- **Geranium Brittlegill**
- **Horn of Plenty**
- **Ivory Woodwax**
- Lilac Bonnet
- Mild Milkcap
- Oyster Mushroom
- Penny Bun
- Porcelain Fungus
- Southern Bracket

Birch Trees

- **Birch Polypore**
- **Brown Birch Bolete**
- **Fly Agaric**
- **Orange Birch Bolete**
- Orange Grisette
- Tawny Grisette
- Ugly Milkcap
- Yellow Swamp Brittlegill

Note: The fungi listed above are a mix of edible and poisonous fungi. They are listed as such, as one would benefit from awareness of other potentially lethal species nearby, and thus can exercise prudent care in the selection of

mushrooms whilst in areas that are populated by the mentioned trees or woodland types.

3.2 Grasslands

One would be familiar with the site of grasslands, as these are often used as the grounds where cows and other livestock would be put out to pasture, and where farmers may engage in the practice of transhumance, where livestock are often moved from one grazing area to another. This is not however, the only interpretation of what a grassland can be, as it can also pertain to areas where the trees are not so densely packed, in that there are open spaces where grassy fields may be present. Because of this mix, it is entirely possible for the forager to encounter species that have been mentioned in the aforementioned tables, particularly when there are those trees that are present in the grassland areas. The grassy areas that have been mentioned in the earlier part of the first paragraph, where these have been commonly applied to the pasturelands of Great Britain and Ireland; also include the cemeteries, and churchyards. In essence, any area in which there are grassy areas sparsely populated with trees or are located away from a dense forest of trees may be categorized as a grassland. It is undeniable that one can find edible mushrooms in this type of habitat, as this was mentioned in the previous chapter. There is an abundance of mushrooms, however, the variety of mushrooms available are few. While one cannot accurately determine as to the reason for lack of variety on the mushrooms, this may be due to the uniformity, in that there are few factors and species to contribute to the deviation of the environment such as the presence of other trees, or soil types. The grasslands are at their prime in the late summer to early autumn areas, where the forager may find the Field Mushroom aplenty, along with other familiar species in sufficient numbers that one would not have to worry about the quantity of mushrooms. There are other smaller species, but the Fairy Ring Champignon, is a treasured morsel of many foragers, and one would do well to try it. In grassy areas where the land has not been enriched by any form of fertilizer, the forager may encounter the waxcap.

Fungi in the Grassland Areas

Fungi in the Grassland Areas

- **Fairy Ring Champignon**
- **Field Blewit**
- **Field Mushroom and *Agaricus* species**
- **Fool's Funnel**
- **Liberty Cap**
- Parasol Mushrooms
- Puffball
- Shaggy Inkcap
- Stubble Rosegill
- Waxcaps of the *Hygrocybe* species

3.3 Roadsides

The roadside is not exactly a place where the forager could think to forage mushrooms, particularly if these roadsides happen to be busy thoroughfares such as the expressways. When one moves into the quieter roads however, where there are little to no vehicles, then one can appreciate the beauty of the roadside as a place where one can forage for mushrooms. There are mushrooms that can appear along these pathways, and if they are edible, they may be safely picked, or even photographed for a record of their appearance and location. The fungi that inhabit the roadsides, however, are those that have been accustomed to more saline areas. While one might question since when roads became salty, this is because of the practice of salting the roads in the wintertime. There are some species that are commonly found in the grasslands or woodlands that may also be found in this area, simply because the road passes through or close to these areas. It would be reasonable to assume that because roadsides are generally areas bereft of disturbance – vehicular traffic does not count, people rarely walk on the roadsides, nor would one expect the soil nearby to be tilled nor fertilized, the forager may find a variety of other species. There is another plausible explanation as to the diversity of fungi – tyres. Spores from other areas may cling to tyres, and therefore be transferred to other areas along the roads where they may begin to integrate themselves into the land.

3.4 How to Find Good Areas to Forage

If one would want to forage, there would be the need to avoid areas where one can see other foragers, because there is a high likelihood that, where one forager is present, others are also present, and therefore that area might have been picked over multiple times. There may be nothing left to pick, or if there is, these are not the choicest pieces and have been rejected by other foragers. What can be done to remedy this is to find places that are remote enough for the forager to access, though not remote enough that one cannot call for help. However, this is easier said than done. While one can simply trawl the internet for relevant information on where to forage, other resources may include The Forestry Commission and the Woodland Trust. They would be able to provide insight into publicly accessible woodlands where one may forage – if you do this, you would also be able to obtain the necessary permission and/or permits to legally forage in these areas. If one can obtain a map with satellite images, it would be possible to identify potential areas where one can forage, provided that is, they are a skilled map reader, or have access to one. Some websites for instance, would be able to provide information on the legal rights of way, where one would be able to forage. All the same, it would be best to seek out permission from the landowners of the land from which one desires to forage; it is more worthwhile than potential charges for trespassing. There are also ways to obtain information to determine the footpaths along which one can travel to search for mushrooms. In this instance, it would be more prudent to stick to the paths accessible to the public, rather than risk the ire of landowners. The probability of a forager that can encounter a variety of mushrooms in one area is rather low at best. If one stumbles across an area full of mushrooms, that’s alright. If one continues to search high and low for mushrooms in some areas, but comes up empty-handed, then it would be best to migrate the search to a different locale. There is no point in the exertion when there is naught to show for it. Simply move to another part of the forests, or even move to areas where the land is moister, preferably near areas where there are streams, as fungi thrive in moisture. Autumn and Winter months can be particularly harsh for foragers, so if the fields and woods are barren, opt to search in denser areas where the temperatures might be warmer.

3.5 Seasonality

The presence of mushrooms in a field greatly depends on the coincidence of various factors. The right soil, the right temperature, the right amount of moisture, and the substrate on which the mushroom prefers to grow on. Seasons, particularly, play a significant role in the presence or lack thereof of mushrooms. This section is in reference to the four seasons, and one can consider that mushrooms and other fungi are just as sensitive as a person with regards to the season. They may be more sensitive than a person, given that they are a species that cannot immediately adapt to a particular season. Hence, it is expected that in the coldest time of winter that mushrooms would not be around, given the frigid temperatures. Mushrooms will not make an appearance until such time that the temperature begins to be milder. There are instances however, where, if determined enough, a forager can find a colony of fungi concealed within the bark of a dying or decayed tree, as the temperatures are significantly milder compared to the general environment. This is still an exception rather than the rule. By the time spring rolls around however, the luck of the forager begins to turn, and there are some truly sublime species that make their presence known to them. The morels, with their spongy, distinctly honeycombed caps make their appearance; and the St. George's Mushrooms which appear on or around April 23 – aptly enough, St. George's day in England. There are, of course, a host of other fungi that make their appearance, and are at their best in the spring season. Once there is an increase in the temperature however, this begins to herald the end of spring, and the arrival of the summer months. Mushrooms that make their presence known in the summer months are rather unpredictable as to their location, and when in the summer will they begin to make their appearance, even if the conditions in which they usually thrive are not so different after all. Among the species of mushrooms that tend to appear in this manner are the Chicken of the Woods, Field Mushrooms, Horse Mushrooms, and a hardier one, the Fairy Ring Champignon, a mushroom known to withstand the summer temperatures and a lack of sufficient water. The midsummer months though, are a period that may be beneficial or detrimental to the fungi, dependent on the presence or lack thereof of rainfall available to moisten the ground. Regardless of the outcome, there are still species that definitely make an

appearance in the midsummer period even If there is a lack of water in the area. Too much moisture is also bad, as the trees on which some fungi have a mycorrhizal relationship with do not favour the excessive moisture. Too much moisture too, provides a suitable environment for slugs, which often consume fungi for their own sustenance. A rule of thumb with regards to seasons, the further north one is located, the earlier the mushroom season may be. In the fall months, many have run away with the assumption that the peak of all mushrooms spans the period of time from September to October in the British Isles. While this was the case then, one would have to account for the weather changes that may affect the time at which mushrooms begin to peak. The transition into the autumn months would see the appearance and disappearance of numerous species of fungi, but again, these are dependent on the presence of moisture in these months. There are instances though, where fungi may not even make an appearance. When this happens, the forager should not fret, but rather persevere and search for another species. Once the conditions are right, and they make their appearance, the forager will be surprised by the abundance of mushrooms that begin to make their appearance. The winter months often spell the end of the mushroom season, though there are still some hardier species that are able to survive well into the winter months. Velvet Shanks are able to survive being frozen and become the barometer by which one can adjudge the point at which mushrooms are still able to appear. Apart from these, Jew’s Ears, and the Oyster Mushrooms can be found.

3.6 Conclusion

Mushrooms are a highly unpredictable species to forage for, and therein lies the beauty, as one does not necessarily know all the time, what mushrooms can be found in the various seasons, and in various locations. The mushrooms share a particular preference for certain locations, but again, this is dependent on the presence of several factors such as the presence of certain trees and conditions. One can expect then, to enjoy the forage, as the beauty of the act lies in the discovery of the treasures that lie in wait at the forest. The rewards are well worth the effort once one takes a bite of the edible mushroom foraged from the forest, and sauteed or cooked in the recommended manner. The next chapter deals with the preparatory steps needed by the forager to prepare for their own wild hunt.

4 THE PREPARATIONS OF THE FORAGER

While the forager may begin to acquaint themselves with the intricacies of mushroom identification and be able to tell apart poisonous from edible species, this would be for naught if they also failed to take into account their own safety. True, one may not have perished from the effects of mushroom poisoning, but because of improper safety measures, the forager may sustain an injury, or worse. The remoteness of some areas means that there would be a dearth of mobile signals, and therefore there would be no one who may come to the aid of the forager. There are instances of deaths that resulted from the use of improper footwear, or the presence of inclement weather that has led to the death of the forager. There is an added emphasis now on safety and the proper equipment to ensure that when the forager does venture out into the wild, they are at least well equipped to handle themselves and whatever comes their way.

4.1 Eyes

The eyes of a person, and the forager, are often the first to perceive the presence of a mushroom. However, the mushroom in question might be located in less-than-ideal places, such as in areas surrounded by branches, one might actually walk into an ill-placed branch that may potentially injure the eyes. To avert this disaster, the forager would be well advised to wear either safety goggles, or to use glasses without graded lenses to ensure that the eyes have protection.

4.2 Orientation

This was touched on in the previous chapter, but will be elaborated on in more detail. When one happens to be in the throes of exploration, foragers can relate to the single-minded focus on the search for the perfect mushroom, to the point that they begin to go deeper into the woods, and once they are able to find the mushroom that they have searched for, they find themselves in the middle of the forest, with no way to orient themselves to their environment and find their way out. What can only make this worse, is that in an era where many are heavily dependent on technology, and the forager just happens to find themselves in the one spot where there is little to no cellular service, then the option to call local emergency services gets chucked out the window. What can be done to remedy this?

Satellite maps are a useful tool to have provided one was able to obtain a high-resolution printout; otherwise, one would have to rely on the old navigational standby with the map and a compass. These two pieces of equipment are essential to the arsenal of tools that the forager may need to use despite their simplicity. That aside, it would also do for the forager to ensure that one examines the area thoroughly for potential areas in which one might get lost and familiarize themselves with the place.

It is also possible, and more ideal to travel with a companion, to not only aid in the search for mushrooms, but also have another head to help come up with the solution. Alternatively, they may also help prevent the forager from disorientation, as they would be able to help retrace the steps taken once they have ventured into the forests.

4.3 Equipment

The forager can opt to simplify the amount of equipment they can carry with the use of a simple knife and a basket with which the mushrooms can be carried. This is an oversimplification of the tools needed however, as one would also need a variety of tools to be considered well-equipped to forage in their chosen spot. The previous sections themselves note that the forager would be wise to equip themselves with eye protection, as well as a map and compass, so one cannot simply just leave with a knife and basket and be done with it. One would have to be able to safely collect and identify the fungi to ensure that the trip was worth the effort. The following are among the recommended equipment for foragers:

- Magnifying Glass or a Hand Lens – the presence of the magnifying glass would enable the forager to examine the finer details of the mushroom in question. Throughout this book, there were mentions of the examination of the gills and other pertinent characteristics of the mushroom, and the use of a hand lens would greatly aid in the identification process. That said, for the myopic forager, this would be a useful tool as well, given that some mushroom species have gills and other parts too small to be seen and examined by the unaided eye.
- Knives – one cannot do without a knife, though the carriage of one is strictly regulated by whatever laws are applicable in one's locale, so one would have to do their homework to ensure that they have permission to carry a knife on their person. For the forager, it is recommended if not mandatory, to use either a folding knife or a knife with a sheath. For one, it is extremely dangerous to walk around with an unsheathed blade on one's person, as an accidental tumble may result in a potential laceration or stab wound. For another, it may be illegal to carry an unsheathed knife. The knife is used to carefully excise the mushroom body from the rest of the fungus. Contrary to popular belief, whether one pulls or cuts the mushroom does not cause extensive damage to the mycelia that are concealed beneath the substrate, as it would take a tremendous amount of force to inflict the damage necessary to destroy or affect the fungus. Excision would also ensure that any debris that are attached to the mushroom itself would

be reduced, if not eliminated. The knife may also be used to excise the parts of the mushroom that have been damaged, and to split the stem to determine its contents and structure. **Note:** Prior to the excision of the stem from the base, it is necessary to determine first if the stem is attached to a volva; or if it changes colour upon exposure to air or exudes a substance or scent; these are characteristics that would help aid in the identification of the mushroom picked.

- Brushes – one may wish to have two sets of brushes for the mushrooms; one for the kitchen and one for outdoors use, to prevent the occurrence of cross-contamination. The brushes are used to remove bits and pieces of debris that may have adhered to the body of the mushroom. For the kitchen, one can use a soft-bristled brush, or other brushes provided the bristles are soft. Those with long handles are best suited for outdoor use. One may use a hemispherical brush to clean the mushrooms as these are ones that allow the use of one hand to handle and clean the mushroom at the same time.
- Containers – once the forage has been done, and the mushrooms picked, the forager will want a receptacle in which one could place all of the foraged mushrooms. However, not any old container would do, as there are a few considerations to be made. Because there are a variety of mushrooms that may be mixed in, it would be a more prudent action to keep each mushroom separate to ensure that the edible and unidentified species do not mix with each other and mess up the identification process. Second, would have to be the means by which the mushrooms are transported, the container would have to be sturdy enough to transport the mushrooms and keep them segregated. Therefore, it would be best, as a catchall, to use a large basket with a metal lid, to ensure that there is sufficient air circulation amongst the weaves of the basket, and that in the event one takes a tumble, the mushrooms do not get scattered. Second, use paper, not plastic. Not only is paper better for the environment, it also provides sufficient aeration to all of the mushrooms that are in it. It also makes it easier for the forager to label the bag with the mushroom and ensure that it remains separate from the others. Plastic containers may be more durable yes; however, air circulation is non-existent and would cause the mushrooms to speed up their decay process. They may be used however, for those species of mushrooms that are too delicate to

withstand any form of impact, and for species that are unidentified. Always keep suspected poisonous species away from known edible species.

- Walking Sticks – a walking stick would be the ideal helpmate for the forager, as not only does it serve as an assistive device to aid in the traversal of hills and slopes, but also serves as an extended probe by which one can easily push aside leaves and the other various detritus of forest matter from the ground to locate mushrooms. The stick may also be used to leave marks on trees, to ensure that one does not get lost. With a knife attached to the end of the stick, it may also be used to carefully slice off mushroom bodies that are suspended above the ground.
- Notecards, Pens and Pencils – they would allow the forager to take note of the mushrooms that they have picked, and would provide a space to note specific characteristics encountered in the identification process. The forager would be able to note details such as if the mushroom grows singly or in clusters; in rings; on trees, or virtually any other distinctive characteristic. One may tape these to the bag that contains the mushroom for easier and more organized identification of the mushroom.
- Cameras – while it may seem irrelevant and obsolete with the advent of more advanced cameras on a smartphone, a sturdy, lightweight camera remains an indispensable tool in the identification of a mushroom and the location in which it was found. It would also help record the appearance of the mushroom before it was picked, so further identification may be done. Pair this with the notecards and pens to ensure that the mushroom identification process becomes more streamlined and detail oriented.
- Attire – while it would be nice to discuss each article of clothing in detail, that may derail the focus of the book on safety. Waterproof boots are a recommended item of clothing as not only does this save the feet from any dampness, it also allows one to trudge through the forests without fear of mud. Long-sleeved shirts are recommended as these provide additional protection from branches, thorns and brambles that may be present amongst the mushrooms. In lighter weather, an insulated vest would be paired with this, to provide additional protection from the elements. A vest with numerous pockets would

help carry all the additional equipment needed by the forager. In addition to this, sturdy pants, preferable those that dry quickly are recommended. Denim and blue jeans are not a suitable material for pants, as they can be quite heavy. Be sure to tuck the hems of the jeans into the boots to prevent tick infestations. Wear brightly coloured outfits to make one easily spotted by other people.

- Repellent – for clothes and for the body, as this would prevent the attraction of any insects that may be drawn to either the forager or the mushrooms that were picked. There are powders that may be used on a person and clothing to avoid tick infestations, as Lyme Disease is a potential pitfall that the forager may experience.
- Sunscreen – while not the beachside, the amount of sunlight that filters through the forest canopy may cause skin damage and sunburns that the forager may wish to avoid.
- Hats- a hat would help provide additional shade for the forager, and in a jiffy, may serve as additional receptacle for mushrooms if one has been too zealous in the harvest of these morsels.
- A light snack and drink – this would ensure that one does not suffer from any instance of low blood sugar while one forages, and the drink (preferably water), would provide sufficient hydration while one forages for the mushrooms.

4.4 Legalities

One cannot deny that society tends to be litigious with regards to questions of property. Given the propensity of the forager to traverse boundary lines in the search for the mushrooms, this single-mindedness may prove to be detrimental if they happen to harvest the mushroom, on a piece of property that belongs to another person. That said, though one has to be physically prepared with the equipment, one also has to contend with the legalities involved in the ability to forage for mushrooms, and any wild plant.

First, we deal with the question of jurisdiction, as each constituent country of the United Kingdom has their own sets of laws that are only applicable to the respective boundaries of their countries. Hence, one can expect that English laws only apply to the area of England; and Scottish law be applicable only in Scotland, but not in England and Wales. The Republic of Ireland has its own distinct set of laws that pertain to the forager, and would not find recourse in the United Kingdom without minimal legal involvement. For the best part, it would do for the forager to remember the legal maxim “ Ignorance of the Law excuses no one”. Therefore, one would have to be aware of the laws that are applicable in their locality to ensure that one is accounted for with regards to the property laws and environmental protection laws set in place to protect the mushroom, and the rights of the property owner as well. In this section, the chapter provides a brief overview on the pertinent laws that are applicable to the forager with regards to the harvest of wild species. Please note that this section is not meant to be any substitute for legal advice, and any legal matters would be best taken up with your local solicitor.

4.5 The Theft Act

It may seem outrageous, but the fact remains that if a forager happens to harvest a species that grows on the land of another person, the act will constitute theft. However, with regards to the application of the provisions of this act in England and Wales, there would need to be some historical context.

The cause of action that initiated the involvement of foraged species under the purview of this act derives from the initial statement made by landowners that the edible species that have grown on their land were cultivated, though foragers and mycologists would now render that argument untenable with the mere fact that the cultivated mushroom is a vastly different species from the field mushroom. Subsequently, the argument made would be bereft of merit. However, in the context of the law then, anyone who foraged for the field mushrooms on the property of another farmer would certainly be convicted then, as all the farmer had to do to prove their defence was to gesticulate to a manure pile, placed ostensibly to foster the development of the field mushroom, and with that act, attempted to circumvent the provisions of the Theft Act then, with the notion that the mushrooms were not wild, but were cultivated, and thus the act constituted theft. Despite the unfairness of the defence, and the accusation, the case nearly resulted in the conviction of the forager. Similar applications in the circumvention of the law saw the amendment of the Theft Act in 1887, when a similar defence was raised by the farmer who alleged that a forager was in the act of mushroom collection, where the mushrooms in questions were commercially sold by the said farmer. The complainant farmer withdrew the charges of the removal of plants, and the resultant property damage from the trespass. The mushrooms, however, were later narrated by the farmer to be wild, not cultivated, though he still earned from their sale. The mushrooms were then not deemed to be cultivated roots or plants, under the provisions of the Malicious Injury to Property Act of 1864, and though they were of significant commercial value to the landowner, they cannot be deemed destroyed property.

The resultant amendment reads:

“A person who picks mushrooms growing wild on any land, or who picks flowers, fruit or foliage from a plant growing wild on any land, does not (although not in possession of the land) steal what he picks, unless he does it for reward or for sale or other commercial purpose. For purposes of this subsection ‘mushroom’ includes any fungus, and ‘plant’ includes any shrub or tree.”. This entails that if the forager happens to be on the land of another person, regardless of the presence or lack thereof of permission, and picks mushrooms; the act is not a crime. However, if one does not have permission to be on the land, this results in a civil action for trespass to property – which in itself means that the matter is dealt with in the civil courts, rather than a criminal one. The forager then should strive to seek permission from the landowners of the property from which they choose to forage to avert this set of circumstances. If the forager is caught by the landowner, or an agent of the landowner, the agent or landowner cannot demand that the forager turn over the mushrooms to them, as their action would constitute theft. What they are legally permitted to do is to ask the forager to leave, and the forager should leave with haste towards the nearest exit. The provisions of the act are only applicable to wild species. It is a crime to pick from cultivated vegetable gardens and orchards as these have been carefully handled with human intervention. It is also a crime to commercially benefit from the sale of the items that have been foraged. The Act does not apply to Scotland, though the rules may find application there at most.

4.6 The CROW Act

This piece of legislation pertains not to the avian species, but rather to the abbreviation of the Countryside Right of Way (CROW), and where property lines have bisected numerous areas that severely limit the areas where foragers are able to safely and legally forage, the implementation of this law accrues benefits to the forager who only wishes to access the countryside where the choicer morsels can be foraged from. England and Wales have taken initiatives to open land for public use under the purview of recreational purposes. These areas have been limited to the upland sections, mountains, downlands and the heaths of both countries. Subsequently, the implementation of the CROW act opened access to most lands that numerous landowners did not want to abide by and have attempted to contest the implementation of the law in contrast to their rights as property owners. There are some areas that are now under the coverage of the CROW Act, that have been freely donated by landowners, and the Forestry Commission among other authorities. While this may seem altruistic at best, once one gets to the fine print of the legislation will one realize that despite the apparent win of the forager in the ability to access other areas of land in which to forage, this results in a hollow victory, wherein the land opened up is barely any use to the forager. There is no definition as to what activities count as recreational purposes, however, there are established limitations on what does not count as a recreational purpose. The construction of the legislation may indicate some levity on the part of the legislator, and if the forager is unable to comply with the activities that fall under this restriction imposed by the CROW Act, the violation does not constitute any form of criminal act by which one can be charged. Among the provisions narrated under the CROW Act include the inability to bring any other animal to the lands demarcated under the CROW Act save for dogs; acts that involve the commission of a crime – which oddly enough, why would anyone wish to incriminate themselves with. The part that affects the forager the most though is the following section:

“Section 2(1) does not entitle a person to be on any land if, in or on that land, he — (l) intentionally removes, damages or destroys any plant, shrub, tree or root or any part of a plant, shrub, tree or root ...”

The advantage for the forager is that the Rights-of-Way are not included under this provision as the right to forage is inherent in them. Though the laws are in place, it is up to the landowner if they wish to implement these laws, and surely, there would be some who would not begrudge the harvest of a few mushrooms. Still, it would be best to meet the prerequisite of permission to ensure that one has all of their bases covered to prevent further interference from any potential legalities. One then can safely forage for mushrooms under the provision of this act.

4.7 The 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act

Where the first two pieces of legislation only found applicability in the jurisdictions of England and Wales, the Wildlife and Countryside Act of 1981 affects all foragers in the United Kingdom, though admittedly, only a few sections of the act remain pertinent to the forager. In this legislation, one encounters the term “Sites of Special Scientific Interest” (SSSI) where the main purpose of these sites is to initiate the conservation of other species. If the forager wishes to know more about the species that are covered under the provisions of this act, the list is publicly accessible to the forager if requested. It is not advised that the forager harvest any of the mentioned species. Though if the forager does inadvertently pick a restricted species, it does not entail the fact that they have violated the provisions of the act, as the burden of proof lies with the authorities to prove if the species has been damaged. Luckily for the forager, there are only a limited number of species that are on the list that are worth the forage, and there would be a very low likelihood that the forager would inadvertently forage for a species on that list. Though the provisions quintessentially forbid the removal of any form of wildlife, be it fauna or fauna; there remains the prerequisite of proof of damage. There is a rather lighter view in the permissiveness of the act, as one can hardly begrudge a mushroom or two. In the context of fungi, there are only four fungi that are on the list that the forager must be aware of. Three of them are not worth the forage. The fourth one, the Bearded Tooth, is an edible mushroom, and despite the restrictions, is quite tasty, and would rather tempt the forager into its harvest. Despite the delicacy of the mushroom, one commits a criminal act when they pick it, and therefore one could only take pictures and stare at the mushroom, but they can never eat it.

Another part of the provision that would be of interest to the forager would be:

I) Subject to the provisions of this Part, if any person -

(a) intentionally picks, uproots or destroys any wild plant included in Schedule 8; or

(b) not being an authorised person, intentionally uproots any wild plant not included in that schedule, he shall be guilty of an offence."

The Schedule referenced in Subsection a of the act pertains to Schedule 8, a list that contains a list of fungi and mosses among other species that contain such restrictions. One can view the list at the Natural England website for their perusal. What the main concern here of the forager, regardless of if they forage for wild plants or mushrooms, is the definition of authority, which overlaps with the prerequisite of permission. Subsection b of the Act mentions that "not being an authorised person" which entails the interpretation that a person with authority may have the permission to forage for the plant or fungi mentioned in the schedule. That said, the forager would be well assured of their legality when they are able to harvest mushrooms. Simply put, the forager should make it good practice to seek permission from the landowners to be able to safely forage for the mushrooms and other plants that they may need. That places the forager well within the definition of an authorised person. One part of concern to the forager, is that if they are an unauthorised person and they go to a site with equipment, this is the commission of an offence, that may land up to fifteen years in gaol. This means, before one forages, do their homework, and seek permission to be granted the authorisation needed to safely forage in lands. This would help avert a host of legal concerns that may plague the forager.

4.8 Knives

Earlier in this section, a knife was mentioned as one of the essential equipment that a forager would need, especially if they intend to harvest mushrooms. It was also mentioned that the forager would have to adhere to the restrictions with regards to the size of the knife, as one should only carry a knife with a sheathe, or a folding knife. Even the size of knives have their own restrictions in accordance with the laws of the locale one may find themselves in, so it would be best to confer with local authorities as to what dimensions of a knife can one safely carry without fear of reprisal from a knife crime act. The following provision narrates the type of knife that a forager may safely utilise:

"*It is illegal to carry a knife in public without good reason, unless it has a folding blade with a cutting edge 3 inches long or less*."

Therefore, one can see why it is recommended to have a folding knife with a blade that conforms to the recommended length. A small Swiss Army knife would be perfectly acceptable to carry provided the blade conforms to the length provided for and does not lock. A blade, even if it conforms to the length provided for, if it can lock or be fixed into position, remains illegal. If in the event local authorities question as to why one carries a blade that conforms to the provisions, all one simply has to say, is that they can. The tone however, matters, and it would be advised to keep a cool head and not be confrontational about this. There remains the matter of proof that one has the necessary permit to carry the knife, such as if they are on their way to a re-enactment or if it is for religious purposes. It remains to be seen however, if the need to forage counts as a reasonable use for a knife, and if so, it would be best if one has permission from the landowner in which they wish to forage as proof. The sentence for the violation of the provisions of the carriage of knives may vary in accordance with the circumstances one may find themselves in. Therefore, one should exercise extreme caution with regards to the knives that one subsequently carries, and defer to the authorities when asked, save if one's personal rights are subject to violation.

4.9 Conclusion

The forager should be well-prepared and well-equipped before they begin to forage in the woodlands and pastures for the mushrooms. Summarily, one has to do their homework before they even embark on the act. Search first for ideal areas that one may find suitable to forage in; determine if these are either CROW lands, or are privately owned; obtain the necessary permission, and then inquire with local authorities as to the presence of any restrictions with foraging, and with the carriage of knives. Once done, one can then begin to gather the equipment and embark on the quest for the perfect mushroom. If this is an exhaustive process yes, but it also serves not only to protect the forager from the legal aspects of property and trespass, but ensures that the mushrooms too, are protected from the hapless individual who only seeks to enrich themselves and destroys nature around them. This is a small price to pay, to ensure that one can not only safely forage, but also assure that there would be more mushrooms to forage from in the future.

5 EDIBLE MUSHROOMS

There is a question as to what makes a mushroom truly edible. There are some species that are considered edible, yes, however, with a minority, they are inedible purely because of the reactions they elicit once a person consumes the mushrooms. However, this is a purely subjective matter, as each person finds that they are sensitive to different triggers. Analogized, one person may enjoy the consumption of the Porcini and Shiitake mushrooms, but others find that their stomachs disagree with the presence of the mushrooms in their diet. There is only one way to find out though if one is truly sensitive to a mushroom, and that is to consume the mushroom, a little at a time, to determine sensitivity. Also, to stave off confusion, the forager should warn others not to consume an entire plate of mixed species, eat only one first. This way, if one does take ill, it would be easy to find out which mushroom is the culprit. It also saves on laboratory costs for the person. The subject of edibility is one that varies from culture to culture, as there are some cultures where some mushrooms are edible, and some cultures where the mushroom is not. There is the need to properly identify the mushroom as an edible species, and not merely rely on information that a mushroom is not toxin free. There are mushrooms that are not poisonous yes, but they can elicit a gastrointestinal reaction so violent that one might be turned off permanently from the consumption of that ill identified mushroom, or from mushrooms altogether.

5.1 Morels

Common Name: Morel

Scientific Name: Morchella esculenta

Seasonality: The forager may search for the morel mushroom in the springtime, where it is at its best and at its peak, as an early spring mushroom.

Location: In hardwood and coniferous forests, where it can be hidden among the herbs and grasses that grow at the base of the trees. They may also be found in areas that have been burned; and on substrates composed of chipped bark, and mulch, in areas where there are shrubs and in gardens. It may be found close to urbanized areas, though it can be quite rare in Great Britain.

Growth: It can appear in clusters or alone.

Cap: The forager may be familiar with the honeycombed cap of the morel mushroom, with its irregular folds and ridges. The younger caps are darker than the more mature versions of the morel mushroom. The cap may be 5-20 cm high, and would yield a cream to pale brown spore print. The cap itself would be coloured light brown to grey.

Stem: The stem of the morel has a mealy surface, that if cut, would reveal a hollow interior. The stem has a pale yellow exterior and can reach a length of 5-12 cm and a width of 2-10 cm.

Look-Alike Species: The False Morel is a deadlier species that has a wrinkled cap, rather than a honeycomb structure on its cap. The Common Stinkhorn may be mistaken for the morel due to its appearance, and while not poisonous, it does not have a desirable texture. The White Morel is a similar species but is not found in Great Britain.

Warning: No Member of the Morel Species should ever be eaten raw. They should always be cooked for at least 10 minutes.

Many a gourmand would be familiar with the delicacy that is the morel mushroom. The rich flavour of the mushroom lends itself well when paired with pancetta or bacon and may be used in pies and stir-fried with other vegetables. However, this is a mushroom that must be cooked before it can be used as it contains a gastrointestinal irritant called hydrazine, which breaks down upon exposure to heat while the morel is cooked. Alternatively, if one wishes to avoid the potential gastrointestinal irritation, one can parboil the mushroom and discard the water, before the morel is fried or integrated into a sauce. Some morels are available dried as they tend to dry rather well. Simply rehydrate the morels in stock or hot water and use as one would a mushroom. While fresh, the morel may be frozen in order to preserve it.

5.2 Semifree Morel

Common Name: Semifree Morel

Scientific Name: Mitrophora semilibera

Seasonality: The forager may search for the Semifree Morel in the early springtime, where it has a longer season compared to the actual Morel.

Location: In the dense grasses of the forests, and on the sides of pathways in damp locations.

Growth: The semifree morel always appears in groups.

Cap: The forager would find that the conical, hollow cap of the Semifree Morel has a dark greyish-brown colour, with a free cap rim. The cap may be 1-4 cm high, and have a cream-coloured spore deposit.

Stem: The stem of the semifree morel has a comparatively thinner flesh than the morel mushroom, that would be apparent when one splits the mushroom lengthwise. The stem of the mushroom has an interior cavity, not unlike the hollow chamber of the morel mushroom. The stem is 3-10 cm in height and has a width of 1-2 cm.

Look-Alike Species: The False Morel is a deadlier species that has a wrinkled cap. The Common Stinkhorn may be mistaken for the morel due to its appearance, and while not poisonous, it does not have a desirable texture. The White Morel is a similar species but is not found in Great Britain.

Warning: No Member of the Morel Species should ever be eaten raw. They should always be cooked for at least 10 minutes.

There is some existent dispute as to the edibility of the semi-free morel mushroom, as it needs to be cooked before it may be eaten, as with the other morel mushrooms. However, there are people who develop stomach upsets after the mushroom has been consumed, even if the mushroom has been cooked thoroughly. Most foragers consider this mushroom to be edible, but often not worth the bother, as it has a thinner flesh compared to the actual morel mushroom, which makes it comparatively insubstantial and not worth the bother of foraging. Despite the lack of substance to the flesh, it does at least carry the same flavour profile as the morel mushroom and may be used in the same way one can use a morel. The person who cooks it though would have to be aware of potential stomach upsets when it is used though.

5.3 St. George’s Mushroom

Common Name: St. George’s Mushroom

Scientific Name: Calocybe gambosa

Seasonality: The forager may search for the mushroom, appropriately enough on St. George’s day (April 23), or at least around this period, when it makes its first appearance. It has a peak season from Spring to Summer, and is common in England, but not elsewhere in the British Isles.

Location: The mushroom prefers to grow in rich soils in the grassy areas, and on the hedgerows. It may also be found along the roadsides, gardens, parks and in forests that grow on chalky or limestone soils.

Growth: It can appear in clusters or arranged in fairy rings.

Cap: The cap of the St. George’s Mushroom has a creamy white to brown colour, with a fleshy, slightly greasy, smooth texture. The cap spans 3-12

cm in width and yields a cream white spore deposit. The margin of the cap is smooth and rolls slightly inwards. The gills are adnexed (narrowly attached to the stem), in character, densely packed and cream-white in colour.

Stem: The stem of the mushroom is firm and white when split lengthwise, and is 2-7 cm high, and 1-2.5 cm wide.

Look-Alike Species: The Entoloma species may be mistaken for the mushroom and are highly poisonous. The Entoloma species have a pink spore deposit, as well as pink gills once the mushrooms have been fully matured. The Livid Pinkgill is a similar species but is quite brittle and has a terrible scent.

Warning: The mushroom may be mistaken for other similar species, all of which are poisonous. It is best to always check the spore print, as the St. George's mushroom will yield a cream white spore deposit.

The mushrooms are often described as those with a mealy texture, and as a result some people may either like or dislike the mushroom. Regardless of the difference in opinion, it is still considered to be a delicacy. They may be eaten raw in salads, or sauteed and paired with seafood, or offal-based dishes. The mushrooms are also able to pair well with chicken, as mushrooms on toast, and in a wild mushroom risotto. For those who wish to preserve the mushrooms, they are also able to dry well.

5.4 Summer Truffle

Common Name: Summer Truffle

Scientific Name: Tuber aestivum

Seasonality: The forager may search for the mushroom from summer to the fall months.

Location: The mushroom prefers to grow beneath the soil, where it has a mycorrhizal relationship with beech and birch trees, in hardwood forests. It is rarely found in the United Kingdom.

Growth: It only appears by itself.

Cap: The cap of the Summer Truffle is virtually non-existent as it does not have the appearance of a typical mushroom, given its spherical nature. That said, it bears similarity to the Perigord Truffle of France, and has warts that

are pyramid-shaped, rather than hexagonal. The colour of the surface is black, and it has a diameter of 2-5 cm. It has yellow-brown spores.

Stem: The summer truffle has no stem; it is a singular fruiting body.

Look-Alike Species: There are no dangerous look-alike species for the Summer Truffle.

Warning: There are no specific warnings for the Summer Truffle.

The epicure may find some solace in that the summer truffle is a more affordable version of the Black and White Truffles often found in France and Italy. It has a particular preference for hardwood forests, where it grows beneath the beech and birch trees, and has a fragrance similar to, but not exactly that of the Black Truffle, with which it bears a close similarity. It does have a milder flavour compared to that of the Black Truffle, and when sliced open, it has a solid brown flesh, with white veins interspersed through it. It may be used as one would other truffles. While one would have to dig at the base of the trees, carefully, one can tell where it usually is through the presence of flies, that are attracted by the scent that the truffle exudes.

5.5 Chicken of the Woods

Common Name: Chicken of the Woods

Scientific Name: Laetiporus sulphureus

Seasonality: The forager may search for the mushroom high up on the trees, in the early summer to fall months.

Location: The mushroom prefers to grow on trees, where it prefers hardwood species such as oak.

Growth: It appears as a large, tiered cluster of mushrooms, that emanate from a single body.

Cap: The body of the Chicken of the Woods mushroom is comprised of several mushrooms that form a composite body. Hence, one can see that the cap is yellow to yellow orange in colour. Each tier is called a bracket, and these may span up to 10-50 cm wide, 10-30 cm in depth, and be 1-5 cm thick. The spore deposit that one obtains from this mushroom is white. The colour of the cap tends to be quite shiny while young, but takes on a dull appearance as it grows older.

Stem: There is no stem on the Chicken of the Woods mushroom, however, if split lengthwise, the flesh is quite soft, but becomes crumblier as the mushroom body begins to mature more. The pores of the mushroom are yellow in colour.

Look-Alike Species: There are no dangerous look-alike species for the Chicken of the Woods, but the Summer Polypore may be mistaken for it. The colour is not so bright however, and the taste is dull. The Dryad's Saddle is another edible species, but has larger pores, and a different shape compared to the Chicken of the Woods mushroom.

Warning: The forager should thoroughly remove any debris that may be embedded into the flesh of the mushroom, particularly if the mushroom itself has been found on Yew trees. Those mushrooms that may have been found on conifers and Eucalyptus trees may also result in allergic reactions in those who are sensitive to either allergen.

This is a good mushroom for the forager who happens to be a beginner, as one can hardly mistake the Chicken of the Woods for any other mushroom, given its very distinct appearance. There may be lookalike species, yes, but they too are edible, though they have a very different flavour profile. If one is unaccustomed to the consumption of mushrooms, they may use the Chicken of the Woods as a blank canvas with which to try out different flavours. The flesh of the mushroom does have the flavour of chicken, and benefits well from a light sauté with butter and seasonings for up to 10 minutes, and later topped with double cream, sprinkled with chives and a dash of paprika. The older versions of the same mushroom, however, tend to be quite sour, and while still edible, one would have to contend with other flavour combinations to ensure that the sour flavour does not dominate the palate. The mushroom cannot be dried, as it does not lend itself well to this technique. It may be cooked first, and then stored in airtight containers and labelled before they are frozen for future consumption. While the Chicken of the Woods is known to be edible, there are some people who may find sensitivity to it, and if the mushroom is found on Yew Trees, one should exercise caution and carefully clean the mushroom of any debris that may be attached to it, as any part of the yew tree is quite poisonous.

The toxins may not leach into the mushroom, but all the same, the mushroom should be cleaned thoroughly, as debris from any part of the yew tree may be embedded into the flesh of the mushroom. If the Chicken of the Woods mushroom is found on Coniferous trees and or Eucalyptus, one

would have to take precautions as well, if a person who is about to consume it is sensitive to either allergen.

5.6 Chanterelle

Common Name: Chanterelle

Scientific Name: Cantharellus cibarius

Seasonality: The forager may search for the Chanterelle from the summer to the autumn months.

Location: The mushroom prefers to grow on well-drained soils where it particularly favours the bases of spruce and pine trees. The chanterelle may also grow near hardwood trees, where it favours oak trees.

Growth: The chanterelle mushroom tends to grow in a cluster with other chanterelle mushrooms.

Cap: The cap of the Chanterelle mushroom has a distinct yellow colour that may sometimes be tinged with red. The cap spans a width of 2-12 cm. The surface of the cap has a depression in the centre, where the margins of the cap are undulated, similar to waves. The surface of the mushroom turns red when bruised, and the underside of the cap would yield a decurrent attachment of the folds to the stem of the mushroom. The underside would also show veins that are forking and would yield a pale cream spore print. The cap of the mushroom would yield a scent similar to Apricots.

Stem: The stem of the chanterelle mushroom tapers towards the base, and may reach a length of 2-10 cm, and a width of 0.4-1.5 cm.

Look-Alike Species: There are several species within the genera of the Chanterelles that may be mistaken for the Chanterelle Mushroom. The False Chanterelle mushroom has a similar appearance to the mushroom; however, it tends to be quite floppy in structure and lacks the apricot scent that the Chanterelle exudes.

The Jack O'Lantern Mushroom is a poisonous mushroom that has a similar appearance to the Chanterelle, but the gills on the underside of the mushroom are true gills rather than the forked wrinkles of the Chanterelle mushroom. The flesh is also a darker yellow. This type of mushroom however, is rarely found in Great Britain and Ireland.

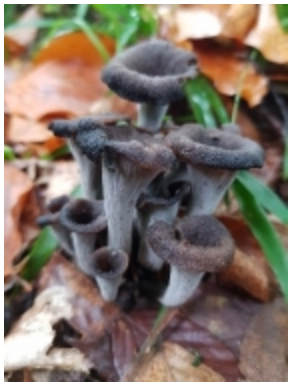
The Brown Rollrim is another mushroom species that may possibly be mistaken for the Chanterelle, however, the flesh of the cap is brown, rather than the distinct yellow of the mushroom, and the false gills of the mushroom tend to separate rather readily into lumps from the cap, if a finger is run through the stem. The false gills of the Chanterelle mushroom do not exhibit this characteristic.

Warning: The forager should carefully distinguish the Chanterelle from the Jack O'Lantern mushroom to ensure that one does not accidentally consume the latter.

The Chanterelle is a highly favoured mushroom sought after by many foragers and epicures as it lends itself particularly well to a plethora of dishes due to its robust flavour. Most cooks tend to pair the Chanterelle with eggs, as the texture of the two items tend to play off each other rather well and may be simply fried and served on toast. The Chanterelle is also paired with stronger-flavoured items such as fish and chorizo, the spicy Spanish sausage, as the mushroom is able to hold its own with these strong flavours. The mushrooms may also be integrated into stews, tarts, pasta and rice dishes. The more prudent cook tends to dry-fry the Chanterelles first to remove excess moisture before it is subjected to other culinary preparations in recipes that are called for it. One may preserve the Chanterelle if they wish, but it does not dry as well as the Winter Chanterelle. The firm texture of the mushroom, however, tends to take well to pickled methods of preservation, and one may employ this method in their preservation. The

Chanterelle, if eaten raw, has a peppery flavour that becomes subtle once it has been cooked.

5.7 Horn of Plenty



Common Name: Horn of Plenty/Black Trumpet

Scientific Name: Craterellus cornucopioides

Seasonality: The forager may search for the mushroom in the summer to fall months.

Location: The mushroom prefers to grow on rich soils, in hardwood forests, where it favours the fallen leaves from the trees as its substrate. It particularly favours the holly tree, as well as the beech trees of southern England where the soil is acidic. The mushroom may also be found beneath softwood trees.

Growth: The Horn of Plenty tends to grow in small clusters or in a linear pattern. One can easily pick a sufficient number of this mushroom in a single area.

Cap: The Horn of Plenty has a cap that is a marbled dark grey-brown colouration that may sometimes darken to black. The cap may be 3-10 cm wide, and is funnel-shaped. The underside of the cap would show that it, and the stem to which it is attached to, are covered with a whitish bloom. The mushroom has a pleasant, fruity scent that lessens in intensity the older it becomes. The cap yields a white spore print.

Stem: The stem of the Horn of Plenty mushroom is darker in colour, and is also covered by the white bloom that extends from the underside of the cap.

Once the mushroom is dissected, the forager would be able to see a hollow interior. The stem reaches up to 5-12 cm in length, and 0.5-2 cm in width.

Look-Alike Species: There are no dangerous look-alike species for the Horn of Plenty. The main concern of the forager would be to find it among the leaf litter, given its similarity to dried or dead leaves.

Warning: There are no specific warnings for the Horn of Plenty.

Despite the grisly name of the Horn of Plenty, it is a highly favoured mushroom amongst British foragers due to its robust flavour that lends itself well to a variety of dishes. The colours of the mushroom, however, make it a fiddly fungus to find as it blends well with the leaf litter on the ground, which may cause the forager to potentially overlook it. Before one takes the Horn of Plenty home however, manually split the mushroom lengthwise and wash the mushrooms.

The structure is fibrous, and it would be advisable to finely chop the mushroom before the forager cooks it to ensure that one would be able to consume the mushroom. The flavour is quite strong and lends itself well to a variety of culinary preparations. It can be eaten either on its own, or sauteed with other wild mushrooms for a flavourful combination. Its flavour, as with other edible species of mushroom, lends itself well to omelettes, and they tend to hold up well in braised dishes such as stews and osso buco. The mushroom becomes a complementary sauce to seafood dishes, when it is cooked in cream and seasoned with a hard cheese such as Parmesan.

The mushroom is related to the Chanterelle family of mushrooms, given its appearance; and to preserve it, one can actually dry the mushroom as it dries rather quickly. The mushroom keeps well, and the aroma of the mushroom intensifies once dried, to the point that it can rival even the truffle in the fragrance of its scent. The forager may find difficulty in the identification of fresh horn of plenty mushrooms as it is naturally dark in colour, hence the forager should avoid mushrooms that have a white film all over the mushroom; are slimy in texture; or that smell of ammonia.

5.8 Cauliflower Fungus

Common Name: Cauliflower Fungus

Scientific Name: Sparassis crispa

Seasonality: The forager may search for the mushroom in the late summer to fall months.

Location: The mushroom prefers to grow at the base of any softwood trees or their stumps, though it has shown some preference for pine trees. It may be found in plantations, or native forests, that is to say, in areas that have been reforested, or even in natural forests.

Growth: The Cauliflower Fungus tends to grow on its own as a solitary body on the stump.

Cap: The Cauliflower Fungus has a distinct appearance that is reminiscent to that of the cauliflower. It exudes a pleasant scent, and has a body comprised of numerous, strong folds that are densely packed together. If split open, the cap would have a branched network in its interior. Underneath each fold, one would be able to find the spores of the fungus. The initial surface of the fronds or folds of the cap are cream-white in colour, but begin to transition to a yellow-brown colouration as it matures. It can reach from 10-40 cm wide. The weight however, may vary from 1-9 kilograms, though bigger specimens may reach up to 14 kilograms.

Stem: The stem of the Cauliflower fungus is short and thick, and is heavily obscured by the fruit body of the mushroom itself.

Look-Alike Species: The S. spathulata is a close relative of the Cauliflower Fungus. The mushroom is still edible, and may be differentiated as the mushroom prefers to grow on deciduous trees, rather than the conifers. The Cauliflower Fungus may also be mixed with other coral mushrooms, and though they are not toxic, they are quite bitter to the taste.

Warning: The Cauliflower Fungus must be cleaned thoroughly by the forager as the insects and other creatures can live within the folds of the fungus itself. The Cauliflower Fungus is one that beginner foragers can readily identify due to its very distinct appearance, which cannot be mistaken for any other species of mushroom. Not much can be said as to the flavour of the fungus as most descriptors tend to attribute it as a mild enough flavour, that can be mixed well with other types of wild mushrooms. Due to the size however, one mushroom may be sufficient enough for several uses, or to feed a large group of people who are not averse to the consumption of such an unusual species. That said, the folds tend to become the habitat of several insects and such, and would require a very thorough cleanse, either with a brush, or through the immersion of the body in water, and removal of the bits slowly. Once washed, the mushroom should be permitted to dry first, before it is prepared for any type of recipe as it can take on too much water, and ruin the dish.

One can then slice the mushroom and shallow-fry them with a pat of butter in a pan and serve on toast. It also lends itself well to add body to a cream sauce. More adventurous cooks however, can also lightly batter the mushrooms in a light tempura batter and fry it, as the mushroom can substitute for meat, and become a rather tastier alternative to it as well. The mushroom in this vein, can also be roasted, but again, this would have to be served to those who are not squeamish about the consumption of mushrooms.

5.9 Beefsteak Fungus

Common Name: Beefsteak Fungus

Scientific Name: Fistulina hepatica

Seasonality: The forager may search for the mushroom in the late summer to fall months.

Location: The mushroom prefers to grow on the trunks of oak and sweet chestnut trees, where the trees may be found in forests, or in parklands. It is very common in England, but is rarely found in other parts of Great Britain and Ireland.

Growth: The Beefsteak Fungus tends to grow on its own. However, there are rare instances where two bodies of the fungus overlap.

Cap: The Beefsteak Fungus has a body that resembles more of a bracket, in that it is flat, and planar. It may resemble a tongue attached to the trunk of the tree. The cap of the mushroom has a blood-red colour, where the surface of the cap is moist, and slightly rough to the touch. The underside of the cap

would reveal pores rather than gills, and may be white or yellow. The underside, if bruised would turn the same red-brown colour as the upper surface of the cap. The flesh of the cap has a meaty texture, and is quite fibrous. The cap may sometimes exude droplets that resemble blood. The cap may reach 10-25 cm wide, 20 cm deep, and 6 cm thick. The spore print of the mushroom would be white.

Stem: The stem of the Beefsteak Fungus is short and thick and is obscured by the fruiting body of the fungus itself.

Look-Alike Species: There are no species that may be mistaken for the Beefsteak Fungus.

Warning: The Beefsteak Fungus has no specific warnings that may be attributed to it.

The Beefsteak Fungus may deceive the forager into the idea that it is actually a piece of meat that happens to grow on a tree. For one, the fibrous texture and blood-red juices are highly reminiscent to that of actual meat, or for those who have had it, ox tongue. It would not resemble meat in any other quality save for its appearance and texture as the scent that it exudes is defined as a pleasant one; and its flavour profile oddly enough, is closer to fruit, rather than meat. The intensity of the flavour however, is variant, as it can range from fruity to a sour note. Despite the similarity to meat, one does not treat the beefsteak fungus as one would meat. Ideally, it would be best thinly sliced and served raw to highlight its fruity flavour. However, this method is only applicable for younger mushrooms. If one happens to harvest the older bodies, one can expect then to have them taste more tannic, similar to old wine. While ordinarily this would render the fungus inedible, there are some methods that involve the use of milk, though this has different levels of success. What can be done with the older bodies is to chop them up finely, and use it to add body to a stock or a clear soup, or simply toss it into a pan for a brief sauté with some onions and parsley to balance the rather strong flavour.

5.10 Fairy Ring Champignon

Common Name: Fairy Ring Champignon, Fairy Ring Mushroom, Scotch Bonnet

Scientific Name: Marasmius oreades

Seasonality: The forager may search for the mushroom in the late spring months to the middle of the fall months.

Location: The mushroom prefers to grow at the grasslands, where it has a particular preference for lawns. It may also on occasion be found in pasturelands, round-abouts and sand dunes that have grass on them. It is widely distributed throughout the British Isles, but does not grow well in areas that are exposed to cold temperatures.

Growth: The Fairy Ring Champignon tends to grow in a fairy ring.

Cap: The cap of the Fairy Ring Champignon has a scent reminiscent to that of sawdust. While it starts off as a convex shape, it gradually flattens, and develops faint lines at the margins of the cap as it matures. The cap is coloured a pale, leathery brown, or a yellow-brown while still moist, but with a darker centre. If the mushroom continues to dry more, the centre becomes paler and the texture becomes smoother. The cap may be 1-5 cm wide; The gills on the underside of the mushroom are adnexed, widely spaced and freely attached. The gills are cream coloured which later transition to white, and would yield a white spore print.

Stem: The stem of the Fairy Ring Champignon is 3-6 cm long, and 0.3-0.8 cm wide. It is quite tough and solid in its structure, and has white interior when the mushroom is split lengthwise. The tip of the stem is cream coloured, which begins to darken as it tapers towards the base of the mushroom, where the base resembles a root.

Look-Alike Species: The Fool's Funnel is a deadly species that may be confused with the Fairy Ring Champignon, as the mushroom can sometimes grow right next to the Fairy Ring Champignon, and it favours the same environment and the same conditions that allow the latter to grow. However, one can distinguish it, as the Fairy Ring Champignon has a sturdier stem and has the scent of sawdust. The Fool's Funnel exudes a mealy scent. The forager should be careful not to mix these two species.

Warning: The Fairy Ring Champignon is a mushroom that should be carefully identified as it can be mixed up with the Fool's Funnel due to the similar colour scheme of the caps.

The Fairy Ring Champignon is a hardy mushroom that contains a special type of sugar that allows it to be preserved in the event that the mushroom fruits in a shortage of water. The dried mushroom simply needs to be exposed to the rain for it to regain its original appearance and texture. Where most mushrooms tend to be used for savoury recipes, the forager may find some versatility in these mushrooms, as they lend themselves well to cookies, where the mushrooms make a suitable substitute for dried fruit. One would have to ensure that if the mushroom is used in such a recipe or similar application, that the mushroom is completely dry. Rehydrated mushrooms may exude so much water that the ratio of the ingredients would be completely thrown off.

Apart from their sweet applications, the mushroom may be used in a savoury application, where the mushroom tends to work well as the base for a risotto, or to add body to stocks, stews and braised dishes. The mushroom may also be lightly fried, and some suggest the use of hazelnuts to add a complementary flavour to the mushroom in this manner. Because the mushroom tends to preserve itself through desiccation, it then follows that the mushroom can be preserved through drying. One can readily identify if

there is a mushroom in their lawn, as the fairy rings are visible through the grass.

5.11 Tawny Grisette

Common Name: Tawny Grisette

Scientific Name: Amanita fulva

Seasonality: The forager may search for the mushroom in the summer to fall months.

Location: The mushroom prefers to grow in the forests, where it seems to have a mycorrhizal association with birch trees. The mushroom is common throughout Great Britain. It may also be found in the heaths, where it has the tendency to grow on acidic soils.

Growth: The Tawny Grisette may be found either alone, or in a line with other Tawny Grisettes.

Cap: The cap of the Tawny Grisette exudes a really faint scent that has no definite characteristics. The cap starts out as oval shaped before it gradually flattens as it matures, and develops striations on its margins. It may also be conical in shape where it gradually flattens. There are no volval remnants on the cap, which is coloured a tawny brown. It may reach 3-8 cm wide, with a white flesh. Inspection of the underside would reveal white gills that are densely packed, and freely attached. The spore print of the cap would be white.

Stem: The stem of the Tawny Grisette is white to a light-orange, with a white, bag-like volva but it has no ring. It may reach 7-15 cm high, and is 0.7-1.2 cm wide. Once dissected the forager should see a white, hollow interior. The texture of the stem and the whole mushroom is rather soft and fragile.

Look-Alike Species: There are several types of grisettes that this mushroom could be mistaken for. The Fragile Amanita (Amanita friabilis) has a smaller volva, but is not bag-shaped. The Pale Grisette (Amanita lividopallescens) is larger and has a paler colouration compared to the Tawny Grisette; the Peeling Paint Grisette (Amanita submembranacea) is also paler and larger. These three aforementioned mushrooms are rarely encountered by the forager however, but additional caution should still be exercised. The Tawny Grisette may also be mistaken for the Amanita eliae, however, the latter mushroom does not have a volvar bag at its base, and the ring may be easily lost. There are doubts as to whether or not the mushroom may be safely eaten. The more identifiable means to distinguish all of these mushrooms from the Tawny Grisette is through the identification of the cap, as the Tawny Grisette will not have any remnants of the volva on its cap, while the other mushrooms do. The Tawny Grisette is more common, while the other mushrooms are rare.

Warning: The Tawny Grisette is toxic if raw, it should always be cooked by the forager.

The Tawny Grisette is a mushroom that belongs to one of the deadlier mushroom families, the Amanita, and from the table, one can see that it shares similar characteristics to other members of the Amanita family. The mushroom is rarely eaten, given its relationship to the Amanitas, but despite

that, it is edible, only when thoroughly cooked by the forager. The flavour of the mushroom is described as a mild, smoky flavour, that lends itself well to a mixed mushroom dish.

5.12 Orange Grisette

Common Name: Orange Grisette

Scientific Name: Amanita crocea

Seasonality: The forager may search for the mushroom in the early summer to fall months.

Location: The mushroom prefers to grow beneath birch trees, and sometimes, at the base of a spruce tree. It prefers to thrive on rich soils, and it may also be found in the lowland areas of Great Britain, as well as near the timber line in higher areas. It is rare however in eastern England and in western Scotland, though it has an unequal distribution in the remainder of Great Britain and Ireland.

Growth: The Orange Grisette may be found either alone, or in a line with other Orange Grisettes.

Cap: The cap of the Orange Grisette is coloured a rather rich orange-brown shade, with a convex shape that makes it resemble an umbrella. Younger caps are bell-shaped, though they gradually flatten, and become smooth to the touch, with some grooves. The margins of the cap are upturned, and the caps are free of any remnants of the volva, similar to the Tawny Grisette. Inspection of the underside of the cap would yield white to pink gills, sometimes tinged pink or cream in colour, crowded together and are freely attached. The spore print of the mushroom is white. The cap reaches 6-12 cm wide.

Stem: The stem of the Orange Grisette is slender, and coloured orange. A unique characteristic of the stem of this mushroom is that it has scales, often described as a serpentine pattern of woolly scales, that terminate at a base. The base cannot be described as a bulb, but it is enclosed by a volvar bag. There are no rings on the stem. The stem reaches 10-20 cm in length, and is 1-2 cm wide.

Look-Alike Species: The Tawny Grisette (see previous section) is smaller and a darker brown than the Orange Grisette, and the Caesar's Mushroom may be mistaken for this species. However, one should not worry too much as both species are edible. However, there are instances where this mushroom has been mistaken for the Deathcap, though the only similarities they have are the size and genera, otherwise this mistake is unusually rare.

Warning: The Orange Grisette is toxic if raw, it should always be cooked by the forager.

The Orange Grisette is another offshoot of the Amanita family, wherein it is one of the few species of that mushroom family that a person can safely consume, provided that the mushroom has been thoroughly cooked, as it is highly toxic while raw. The flavour of the mushroom is often described as mildly sweet and evocative of nuts, which makes this mushroom a more flavourful alternative to the Tawny Grisette. The Orange Grisette is of a size substantial enough to feed a person, however, there should be some precautions taken, as even when cooked, there are still reports of people who complain of gastrointestinal symptoms after consumption of the mushroom.

5.13 Parasol Mushroom

Common Name: Parasol Mushroom

Scientific Name: Macrolepiota procera

Seasonality: The forager may search for the mushroom in the summer to fall months.

Location: The mushroom prefers to grow on sand dunes and in the grassy areas such as pastures. It may also be found in the grassy areas of parklands and forests. It is commonly found in the southern parts of Great Britain and Ireland, and rarely found in the northern parts of these islands.

Growth: The Parasol Mushroom has the tendency to grow in troops, a line with other Parasol Mushrooms.

Cap: The greyish-brown cap of the Parasol Mushroom initially starts out as oval-shaped, but as it matures, it gradually flattens or becomes umbonate with a raised centre.

The cap is scaly to the touch, where the scales are shaggy, and brown in colour. An inspection of the underside of the cap would reveal white to cream gills, that are tightly packed and are freely attached to the cap. The spore print of the cap is white. The cap may reach 10-40 cm wide. It exudes a mild, indistinct scent.

Note: The flesh of the cap will start off as white but will gradually transition to a dirty brown colour upon exposure to air. It should not discolour into a red shade once exposed to air.

Stem: The round, cylindrical stem of the Parasol Mushroom is unique in that it is covered by a brown, serpentine pattern of scales all over. There are two rings, where the superior ring is double and movable. The stem is described as tall, and it terminates at a bulb-like base. It may reach 15-40 cm high and be 0.8-2 cm wide. The bulb may be up to 4 cm wide.

Look-Alike Species: This is a mushroom that is well suited for the beginner forager, though they should be aware of the Green-Spored Parasol. The distinction is that the Green-Spored Parasol has gills that are tinged green and has a different scent.

Warning: The stems of the Parasol Mushroom should be discarded as these are too fibrous.

The Parasol mushroom is a good beginner mushroom that a forager may search for, though they should take notes to distinguish this mushroom from the Green-Spored Parasol, where the latter has green-tinged gills as opposed to the white-cream-coloured gills of the Parasol Mushroom. It is considered to be one of the best, and widely eaten mushrooms of the British Isles.

Younger growths of this mushroom bear resemblance to drum mallets, and the more prodigious cook often uses the structure as a receptacle for an herb and onion stuffing. The mushrooms lend themselves well to a light tempura-batter for a crispy application. The forager may also preserve the parasol mushroom as it dries well and may be reduced to a powder.

5.14 Shaggy Parasol

Common Name: Shaggy Parasol

Scientific Name: Chlorophyllum rhacodes var. bohemica

Seasonality: The forager may search for the mushroom in the summer to fall months.

Location: The mushroom prefers to grow in urbanized areas where it thrives amongst the hedgerows, parklands, gardens and in the forests. It may also be found by the forager in compost heaps as a preferred substrate for the mushroom, or in soils that are nutritionally rich, where it can grow in rings. It may be mostly found however, in the southeast portion of England.

Growth: The Shaggy Parasol has the tendency to grow in troops, a line with other Shaggy Parasols.

Cap: While young, the convex cap of the mushroom is coloured a cinnamon-brown all over. As it begins to mature however, the cap begins to flatten where the cinnamon-brown colouration becomes cinnamon-brown scales set on a white backdrop of the cap. The centre of the cap however, remains entirely brown. The pale brown scales of the matured cap are arranged in concentric circles at the surface of the cap where they terminate at a shaggy margin at the edge of the mushroom cap. The underside of the cap will show white to cream gills that are freely attached and crowded together, that yield a white spore print. The cap has a strong, pleasant aroma

that can be detected by the forager. Once the flesh of the cap is cut into, it starts off as white before it discolours to a red-brown colouration upon exposure to air.

The cap measures approximately 5-20 cm wide.

Stem: The cream-brown stem of the Shaggy Parasol is striped, and does not have the serpentine pattern that characterizes the Parasol mushroom (see previous section). It gradually terminates at a swollen bulb with a sloped top. The stem has a prominent double ring on it. It may reach 10-20 cm in length and be 1-2 cm wide.

Look-Alike Species: This is a mushroom that should be distinguished from the Green-Spored Parasol, where the latter has green-tinged gills. It also has some similarities to the Leucoagaricus nympharum , a mushroom of similar characteristics, and of unknown edibility. It is quite rare, and if encountered has the scent of radish. The Brown Parasol mushroom on the other hand, is an edible species, distinguished by its cap that resembles a bulb with a flattened top.

Warning: The Shaggy Parasol should always be cooked before it is eaten.

The forager may mistake the Shaggy Parasol for the Parasol Mushroom, save for two distinctions. The Shaggy Parasol is smaller in size, and the stem lacks the snake-like pattern that the Parasol mushroom has. The stem of this mushroom is striped rather than serpentine in its patterns, and it terminates at a bulb-like base that has a sloped top. The flesh becomes discoloured to a blood-red or reddish-brown hue upon exposure to air, so this is a characteristic that the forager should be well aware of.

The mushroom is known to cause stomach upsets if consumed in large amounts, hence one should not gorge themselves on this mushroom, even if they find it in abundance. The flesh of the mushroom has a mildly pleasant flavour that lends itself well to mixed mushroom dishes. The mushroom is not as widely dispersed as the Brown Parasol and the Conifer Parasol, but it may be found in the southern parts of England.

5.15 Field Mushroom

Common Name: Field Mushroom

Scientific Name: Agaricus campestris

Seasonality: The forager may search for the mushroom in the summer to fall months.

Location: The mushroom prefers to grow in the flat grassy areas, usually where livestock have pastured, usually horses and cows, in enriched soils. It is present all over the British Isles where it has a wide distribution.

Growth: The Field Mushroom tends to favour growth in a fairy ring pattern, or in line of other large Field Mushrooms.

Cap: While young, the cap of the Field Mushroom is hemispherical. It takes some time before the cap of the mushroom begins to flatten. It starts off with a white colour, that may develop yellowish spots, before it transitions into a pinkish grey colour as it matures.

The underside of the cap would reveal pink gills while the mushroom is still young, which gradually turn into a chocolate brown colour as the mushroom matures. The gills are crowded together, and have a free attachment. The spore print yielded by the mushroom is brown.

The flesh of the cap is white, which does not change colour, though the flesh of the cap may be slightly pink at times. The cap measures 4-10 cm though on occasion it may reach up to 12 cm. The cap has a scent that one would immediately associate with mushrooms.

Stem: The stem of the Field Mushroom is white in colour, and tapers downwards. It may also have an insubstantial ring that is only temporary. It reaches up to 3-7 cm in length, and 0.8-1.5 cm in width. The flesh of the stem has the same characteristics as the cap, in that it is solidly white but may turn pink upon exposure to the air.

Look-Alike Species: While the mushroom should be simple enough to identify, this may be a potential drawback for most beginners, as the beginner may mistake the forager for another type of inedible mushroom. The Yellow Stainer for one, is a mushroom that may cause gastrointestinal upsets. There are other edible Agaricus species that may be confused with the Field Mushroom, but again, these are at least edible and pose no danger.

Some foragers, however, may encounter the Deathcap, a highly toxic mushroom. The distinction is that, where the Field Mushroom prefers to grow in flat, grassy areas; the Deathcap prefers to thrive in forested areas. The two areas may mix however, as there are grassy areas in forests, and there are wooded areas in fields, so additional precautions would have to be undertaken by the forager. The Deathcap has a volva bag at its base, and the gills are coloured white.

The Grassland Pinkgill may be mistaken for the Field Mushroom, but the spores are coloured pink rather than brown, and the mushroom itself bears little resemblance to the Field Mushroom.

Warning: The Field Mushroom has no specific warnings.

The Field Mushroom is a species well-known to be edible. Its classification under the genus *Agaricus* by Carolus Linnaeus signified its importance as one of the edible species of mushrooms. The mushroom is a popular choice among wild mushrooms and is more commonly marketed in restaurants as a portobello mushroom, which is really a term used to refer to large Field Mushrooms, rather than the more contemporary interpretation where it is used to refer to large versions of cultivated mushrooms. Given its versatility, one can simply use the mushroom in any recipe that calls for mushrooms. The flavour of the mushroom is, appropriately enough, what one imagines a mushroom to taste like.

5.16 Horse Mushroom

Common Name: Horse Mushroom

Scientific Name: Agaricus arvensis

Seasonality: The forager may search for the mushroom in the summer to fall months.

Location: The mushroom prefers to grow in the flat, grassy areas where horses prefer to graze. It may also be found in lawns, and in the parklands. It does have a varied habitat, and the forager may find the Horse Mushroom located in the forests, gardens, roadsides and on compost heaps. It is a mushroom that is commonly found in the British Isles.

Growth: The Horse Mushroom tends to grow in fairy rings.

Cap: While young, the cap of the mushroom is shaped like an egg, but as it matures, it gradually becomes convex in its shape, before it flattens out. The cap may range in colour from white to ochre-yellow, and the cap should bruise slightly yellow around the edges, but not too bright a yellow like its more toxic relatives. The underside of the mushroom has freely attached gills, that are crowded together, and are coloured pinkish to chocolate brown, that yield a chocolate brown spore print. Younger mushrooms have gills that are covered by a cog-like ring. The flesh of the cap is white initially, and exudes a scent of almonds, which gradually transitions into an ammonia like scent as it matures. The cap may measure from 7-15 cm but may also reach up to 20 cm in its width.

Stem: The stem of the Horse Mushroom has a smooth surface, but with a superior double ring that hangs from the base of the cap and has a scaly underside. The solid interior is white that may bruise yellow, but never a bright yellow. It may reach 7-15 cm in length, and 1-3 cm wide. The stem gradually expands to a larger and thicker base, with a slightly bent orientation.

Look-Alike Species: There are several mushrooms that could be mistaken for the Horse Mushroom, as it can also grow in the forested areas, and species of the Amanita family of mushrooms may be mistaken for it. The young Horse Mushroom does have a ring like the Amanita, and the gills of both species initially are white coloured. However, the Amanita emerges from a volva at the base of the stem, so that should be the main distinction of the forager. The Yellow Stainer is also mistaken for the mushroom, but have grey streaks on their caps, have flesh that bruise into a bright yellow colour, and has a smell of ink rather than of almonds. They may however be also white in colour and have an indistinct scent that becomes more prominent upon exposure to heat.

Warning: The forager should never consume large amounts of the Horse Mushroom as it contains trace amounts of cadmium- a toxic element often used in batteries.

The Horse Mushroom is one of the mushrooms that have taken well to cultivation in limited amounts. However, the mushroom itself tends to absorb trace amounts of cadmium, and some derivatives of phenyl-hydrazine, so the forager and their companions who wish to consume the Horse Mushroom may do so, but in limited quantities so as not to exceed a particular threshold at which the element begins to exert its toxic effects on the body. Despite the cautionary measures that should be undertaken by the forager, it does work well in most recipes that call for the use of any cultivated mushroom. It has excellent flavours in pasta and does well when stuffed for an appetizer. Simplicity brings out its best flavour, when sauteed with a pat of butter and seasoned with salt and pepper to highlight the almond-like qualities of its flavour.

5.17 Wood Mushroom

Common Name: Wood Mushroom

Scientific Name: Agaricus silvicola

Seasonality: The forager may search for the mushroom in the summer to fall months.

Location: The mushroom prefers to grow in rich soils of the forest, where the soil has been mixed with the debris obtained from the fallen leaves of softwood and hardwood trees. It is a mushroom that enjoys a wide distribution throughout the British Isles.

Growth: The Wood Mushroom tends to grow together in small clumps or arranged in a fairy ring.

Cap: While young, the cap of the mushroom is hemispherical before it begins to flatten as it matures. The cap is coloured white to cream or a yellow-white to pale brown. It has a smooth texture and has veil threads that may be found at the margin of the cap, as well as tiny, grey scales at the centre of the cap. The flesh of the cap may be white or pale pink, and is rather thin, but once exposed to air, transitions into an ochre yellow colour. The underside of the cap would reveal pinkish gills if the mushroom is young, or chocolate brown gills for more mature mushrooms, that have a white edge to them, towards the margin. The gills have a free attachment, and are tightly crowded together. The spore print yielded by the mushroom

is chocolate-brown. The cap has a scent reminiscent of aniseed. It may measure 6-12 cm wide.

Stem: The white stem of the Wood Mushroom is cylindrical that terminates at a bulbous base, and has a pendulous ring. The stem may measure 8-12 cm long, 1-2 cm wide, but the base of the stem may measure up to 3 cm wide. The interior of the stem is solid and white.

Look-Alike Species: There are several mushrooms that could be mistaken for the Wood Mushroom, as it can also grow in the forested areas, and species of the Amanita family of mushrooms may be mistaken for it. The young Wood Mushroom does have a ring like the Amanita, and the gills of both species initially are white coloured. However, the Amanita emerges from a volva at the base of the stem, so that should be the main distinction of the forager. The Yellow Stainer is also mistaken for the mushroom, but have grey streaks on their caps, have flesh that bruise into a bright yellow colour, and has a smell of ink rather than of aniseed. They may however be also white in colour and have an indistinct scent that becomes more prominent upon exposure to heat.

Warning: The forager should never consume large amounts of the Wood Mushroom as it contains trace amounts of cadmium- a toxic element often used in batteries.

The Wood Mushroom is a close relative of the Horse Mushroom, in that it carries the same precautions that foragers should take, particularly with the tendency of the mushroom to absorb large amounts of cadmium, and the phenyl-hydrazine derivatives. Thus, one should exercise moderation in the consumption of the mushroom, and not consume large amounts. The key difference lies in the habitat, as though the Wood Mushroom shares some of the same characteristics as the Horse Mushroom, its preferred area of growth in the forests makes it a less substantial mushroom than the Horse Mushroom. It also has a scent of aniseed and almonds. One can use the Wood Mushroom as with the Horse Mushroom, in pasta, as a stuffed mushroom cap, or simply sauteed with butter and seasoned with salt and pepper to highlight the unique flavour of the mushrooms.

5.18 The Gypsy

Common Name: The Gypsy

Scientific Name: Cortinarius caperatus

Seasonality: The forager may search for the mushroom in the summer to fall months.

Location: The mushroom prefers to grow in acidic soils, where it may be found beneath hardwood trees. It shows a particular preference for beech trees but may be found beneath other hardwood trees. It may also be found in coniferous forests where it prefers to thrive beneath pine and spruce trees. It prefers to thrive in the northern most parts of the British Isles and foragers would find this mushroom plentiful in the highlands of Scotland, but not anywhere else in Great Britain and Ireland. It may also be found in the heaths of Scotland.

Growth: The Gypsy tends to grow only in troops with other Gypsy mushrooms.

Cap: While young, the cap of the mushroom is shaped like an egg, but as it matures, it gradually becomes convex in its shape, before it flattens out into an umbrella-like cap. It has a pale yellow-brown cap, that is slightly wrinkled that gives it a corrugated appearance. While young, the cap may look like it is covered in webs. There are white veil remnants at the centre of the cap. The texture of the cap may have fine scales or a silky feel. The underside of the cap would show very pale brown gills, that gradually

become red. They have a medium-space between each gill, and are adnate in their attachment with serrated or toothed edges. The spore print yielded is pale brown to brown. The cap measures 5-12 cm wide, and has a mild scent of mushrooms with a very pale-yellow interior.

Stem: The stem of the Gypsy is stout. Sometimes it has a swollen base, and has a paler colour compared to the cap. The stem of the mushroom has fine streaks and most unusually has a persistent white ring. The interior is also pale yellow and is solid but fibrous in structure. The stem may measure 5-15 cm in length, and 1-2 cm wide.

Look-Alike Species: There are no species that could be mistaken for the Gypsy save, perhaps for the Poisonpie mushrooms. However, the presence of a webcap means that the forager should take the necessary additional identifications to be assured that the mushroom picked is the Gypsy.

Warning: The mushroom is collected, but should not be eaten if obtained near refuse piles as it tends to absorb toxins quite readily. If found near sites of nuclear radiation, the forager should avoid these altogether.

This is a mushroom that should not be foraged for by a novice forager, as it can be quite hard to identify, even if one has undertaken all the necessary steps in identification save perhaps that, of a more experienced forager. This is because of the presence of the webcap underneath the gills that may conceal further means of identification despite its unique colouration. The additional precaution is that this mushroom does have the tendency to take on heavy metals, and thus if one encounters the mushroom in proximity to sites that have heavy metals or in areas close to radioactivity, one should completely avoid this mushroom altogether. If the forager is able to successfully identify and obtain feasible specimens of the mushroom, the Gypsy carries a mild flavour, and may be used in other mushroom dishes.

5.19 Charcoal Burner

Common Name: Charcoal Burner

Scientific Name: Russula cyanoxantha

Seasonality: The forager may search for the mushroom in the summer to fall months.

Location: The mushroom prefers to grow in the hardwood forests where it has a particular preference for beech or oak trees, but may also be found in coniferous forests. It prefers to thrive in areas where the soil is acidic and rich in nutrients.

Growth: The Charcoal Burner may be found on its own or with other Charcoal Burners in a line.

Cap: While young, the cap of the mushroom is initially convex, before it begins to flatten as it matures. Some of the caps may develop a central depression that becomes quite pronounced. If the mushroom cap is wet, it often feels greasy to the touch, but once dry, it becomes hard, smooth and sometimes velvety to the touch. The cap sometimes peels. The colour of the cap often varies, but often presents as a purple-brown to olive green colour. The underside of the cap would show white to cream gills that are crowded together. They are adnexed or sometimes decurrent in their attachment to the stem, sometimes forked, and have a greasy texture, though they are pliable. The spore print yielded by the mushroom is white, and the cap has a mild scent of mushrooms. The cap measures 5-15 cm wide.

Stem: The stem of the Charcoal Burner, tends to slightly taper upwards, and is usually white, but may sometimes be purple or pink in colour. The stem is quite chunky, and a cross-section would show a solid white stem that is both firm, and quite brittle. It may measure 5-10 cm long, and 1-3 cm wide.

Look-Alike Species: The Charcoal Burner may be difficult to distinguish from the other Brittlegills in its family, but once one is accustomed to its identification it becomes easier to find. The cap has a variety of colours but does commonly present as purplish-brown to olive green with dots of pink, grey or brown. The unique colour along with the greasy texture of the gills, and of the cap, once wet, allows the forager to more easily identify the mushroom. The Russula langei is a rare relative, but if encountered, is darker purple in colour than the Charcoal Burner. It may also be confused with the Oilslick Brittlegill and the False Charcoal Burner.

Warning: The forager should take time to properly identify the mushroom due to its numerous relatives that bear a similar appearance.

There are a lot of lore that pertain to the origin of the name for this mushroom, as its unique colour scheme is said to bear some similarity to the flames that come from a charcoal fire. Other more pragmatic lore places the similarity of the mushroom to the face of a person who was tasked to burn the charcoal at a stove. The mushroom is initially difficult to identify at first, but apart from the distinct colour of the caps, the forager may also feel the greasy texture of the gills, as well as the pliability, as where other brittlegill mushrooms tend to break easily, the gills of the Charcoal Burner feel like the pages of a book as one flips through the pages rapidly. These enable the forager to have easier attempts in the future to locate the Charcoal Burner. It is a popular mushroom, that tends to fry well and be served as an accompaniment to red meat. Chopped, it may be used as a flavourful base for poultry. The mushroom is substantial enough to stand up in stews, soups, and omelettes to which it lends its mild mushroom aroma. It is one of the few mushrooms that may be used raw, and thus, can be used in a salad, or simply seasoned with salt and pepper and served on toast.

5.20 Penny Bun

Common Name: Penny Bun, Cep, Porcini Mushroom, Steinpilz

Scientific Name: Boletus edulis

Seasonality: The forager may search for the mushroom in the summer to fall months.

Location: The mushroom prefers to grow in the forests, on ground that is full of moss, beneath hardwood and coniferous trees. It does have a preference for beech or oak trees.

Growth: The Penny Bun may be found on its own, or in troops with other Penny Buns.

Cap: While young, the cap of the Penny Bun starts of as hemispherical similar to a bun, before it becomes more convex in shape. On occasion, the cap of the mushroom may become completely flat, with raised edges at the margins of the cap. The cap is generally brown in colour, but the margins may sometimes be white. The texture of the cap may be smooth and dry, but can sometimes be a bit greasy and have a wrinkled appearance. The skin of the cap may sometimes overhang from the margins. The underside of the cap would show pores rather than gills, that are coloured yellow to white and may turn a dirty yellow-green and have a fine and rounded appearance. The tubes that form the pores on the underside are sinuate and may be easily loosened. The spore print yielded is an olive-brown. The cap may measure 10-25 cm wide and 5 cm thick.

Stem: The stem of the Penny Bun is white to pale brown, and is quite fleshy. The interior is a pure, solid white, that can sometimes harbour maggots or be stained a different colour by a parasite. The stem may also be club-shaped or barrel-shaped. It can be quite stout and bulbous, and on the upper portions of the stem, the stem is covered by raised, net-like, white lines that form a pattern that contrasts with the light brown surface of the stem. This pattern is not apparent in the lower portion of the stem. The stem may measure 10-20 cm in length, and 3-10 cm wide.

Look-Alike Species: The forager may not possibly mistake the Penny Bun for any other species save if they are unable to distinguish the brown colour from other colours. The poisonous species of boletes are generally coloured pink or red on some part of the mushroom. If the bolete happens to be white, brown, yellow, or olive in its entirety, and if there are no red, pink or blue discolouration that are found anywhere, then the bolete is not poisonous. The Penny Bun may be confused with other edible boletes, though they may not be as tasty as the Penny Bun. The Bitter Bolete is another mushroom that may be mistaken for the Penny Bun, and though the mushroom is not toxic, it is quite bitter. The net like pattern of the Bitter Bolete is brown on a white background, rather than the white on brown background of the Penny Bun. The Bitter Bolete also has pink spores and pores. The Boletus depilatus is a newer species, but other distinctions have yet to be properly identified.

Warning: The Penny Bun is a highly edible mushroom, proper identification would help confirm it is the mushroom that was picked.

The Penny Bun is simply another name for a more popular mushroom, the Porcini, one of the most favoured mushrooms anywhere in the world, and in Continental Europe. It is sought after by many a forager, and it is a mushroom that tends to be well preserved once dried. There are recipes that call for the use of dried mushrooms that are rehydrated with hot water, and may be used in any recipe that calls for porcini mushrooms, of which there are many. The Porcini mushroom is one of the mushrooms that are heavily favoured by the French, Italians, Germans and Poles, and one can expect these cultures to feature the Porcini mushroom quite heavily.

The Penny Bun is a choice morsel and lends itself well to a variety of recipes. Its meaty flavour may be used well on its own, when the mushroom is roasted. It may also be sliced into thick slices, and grilled or pan-fried in garlic butter. This is just a sampler of the simple recipes that call for the Penny Bun, as each culture has their own unique take on what can be done with the Penny Bun.

5.21 Summer Bolete

Common Name: Summer Bolete

Scientific Name: Boletus reticulatus

Seasonality: The forager may search for the mushroom in the summer to fall months.

Location: The mushroom prefers to grow in the forests, beneath hardwood and coniferous trees. It does have a preference for beech or oak trees.

It is present in southeast England, but has an uncommon distribution across the rest of the British Isles.

Growth: The Summer Bolete may be found on its own or in a troop with other Summer Boletes.

Cap: While young, the cap of the Summer Bolete is similar to a bun, or hemispherical. It becomes more convex in shape as it matures, where it may gradually flatten. It is coloured light brown to chestnut or a buff-brown, and is dry and rough to the touch. The cap tends to crack, especially in its central part. The flesh of the cap is white to pale cream and does not discolour upon exposure to air, though it is quite softer as opposed to the Penny Bun. The underside of the cap would reveal white to green-yellow tubes, that terminate into small white pores that transition into a greyish-yellow. The tubes are long and sinuate, and would yield an olive brown

spore print. The cap may measure 7-15 cm wide, though it may reach a maximum width of 10 cm. It exudes a strong and pleasant aroma.

Stem: The barrel-like stem of the Summer Bolete has a white network of lines that contrast over the pale brown colour of the stem. It tends to be quite swollen in general, and a cross section would show a stem that is white, and firm in its interior, but is prone to maggot infestations if not checked properly. It may measure 6-15 cm in length, and 2-5 cm wide.

Look-Alike Species: The Summer Bolete is a species that the forager can hardly mistake for other species of poisonous boletes by virtue of its colour. The poisonous species of boletes are generally coloured pink or red on some part of the mushroom. If the bolete happens to be white, brown, yellow, or olive in its entirety, and if there are no red, pink or blue discolouration that are found anywhere, then the bolete would not be poisonous, though there are questions as to whether it is edible. The Summer Bolete may be confused with the Bitter Bolete, and though the mushroom is not toxic, it is quite bitter. The net like pattern of the Bitter Bolete is brown on a white background, rather than the white on pale brown background of the Summer Bolete. The Bitter Bolete also has pink spores and pores. The Boletus depilatus is a newer species, but other distinctions have yet to be properly identified.

Warning: There are no specific warnings attributed to the Summer Bolete.

The Summer Bolete is closely related to the Penny Bun, and thus the forager can expect the mushroom to have a slightly similar appearance, down to the stout stems and the brown caps, though the Summer Bolete has a lighter colour compared to that of the Penny Bun. The forager would have to pay closer attention to not only the colour of the cap, but on the net-like pattern located on the upper portion of the stem to make the distinction between not only the Penny Bun, but also from the Bitter Bolete. Otherwise, in the identification process, the forager would have to identify the mushroom based on the other narrated characteristics in the table above.

Despite the similarity in appearance, the flesh o the Summer Bolete is not as meaty compared to the Penny Bun, but despite this, it can be used in most recipes that call for the use of a Penny Bun. On its own, the flavour is still quite good, and younger mushrooms stand up well to a pickling

solution and may be safely consumed raw as part of a salad provided the interior of the mushroom is intact. One can eat them as mushrooms on toast, or simply dressed with a light balsamic-based dressing.

5.22 Chestnut Bolete

Common Name: Chestnut Bolete

Scientific Name: Gyroporus castaneus

Seasonality: The forager may search for the mushroom in the summer to fall months.

Location: The mushroom prefers to grow at the base of hardwood forests, where it has a preference for oak trees. It may also be found at the base of pine trees however, where the mushroom tends to thrive on sandy soils. It may not be found in areas however, that are exposed to extreme cold, but enjoy a wide distribution over the rest of Europe, to include the British Isles.

Growth: The Chestnut Bolete prefers to grow in solitude or may be found with other Chestnut Boletes in small clusters.

Cap: While young, the cap of the Chestnut Bolete is shaped like a bun, hemispherical until it begins to become more convex as it matures, before it flattens out and develops raised margins at the edges of the cap. It starts off with a pale brown colouration which darkens as the mushroom begins to mature, whereupon the texture of the mushroom cap starts off as similar to suede leather while the mushroom is young. The cap begins to crack as the mushroom matures. The flesh of the mushroom is brittle and white, but does not stain or change colour upon exposure to air. An inspection of the underside would yield white tubes that are freely attached, and terminate at

white, small pores, that gradually transition to dirty yellow once matured. The pores tend to darken once bruised. The mushroom yields a yellow spore print. The cap exudes a mild smell. It may measure 3-8 cm, but may reach up to 12 cm wide.

Stem: The barrel-like stem of the Chestnut Bolete is smooth and coloured a pale orange brown with a white, chambered interior. The stem is usually swollen at the centre, and is quite brittle in texture, where it tends to crack. The flesh of the stem may be white, and present with patchy brown areas. It may measure 4-7 cm high, and 1-3 cm wide.

Look-Alike Species: There are no poisonous lookalikes that may be confused with the Chestnut Bolete in Great Britain and Ireland, as the more toxic species are located in the Iberian Peninsula and France, which require expert identification. The G. ammophilus species if consumed by accident would result in severe episodes of gastroenteritis for a week.

Warning: There are no specific warnings attributed to the Chestnut Bolete. It is advised to use only species that are firm.

The Chestnut Bolete is similar to the Penny Bun in character, in that it has a stout stem. It differs from the former though, in that the Chestnut Bolete has a chambered interior rather than a stem that is solid and meaty in its entirety. Apart from that the flavour characteristics differ from that of the Penny Bun, in that the Chestnut Bolete is relatively mild and nutty. Despite the difference in flavour profile, it may be used in any recipe that calls for the use of a bolete such as porcinis, and thus one can reasonably substitute this mushroom for the Porcini should the need arise, provided that one has properly identified it. It also does well as a crostini topper, and may be consumed raw with other bolete species tossed together with a dressing based on balsamic vinegar.

5.23 Red Aspen Bolete /Orange Oak Bolete

Common Name: Red Aspen Bolete /Orange Oak Bolete

Scientific Name: Leccinum aurantiacum

Seasonality: The forager may search for the mushroom in the late summer to fall months.

Location: The mushroom prefers to grow in forests, where it has shown a preference for aspen trees, but may also be found beneath beech, oak and the poplar trees. It has a tendency to thrive in deciduous forests.

Growth: The Orange Oak Bolete or the Red Aspen Bolete, typically grows in small clusters.

Cap: While young, the cap of the Orange Oak Bolete/Red Aspen Bolete starts off shaped like a bun or hemispherical, but some mushrooms may originally be conical.

The cap of the mushroom flattens however, as it matures, with the skin of the cap as it begins to overhang from the margins of the cap. The flesh of the mushroom is initially white but will stain black once exposed to air. The underside of the cap would reveal white tubes that are narrowly attached, which once cut will darken to a reddish-black hue, and terminate at small, angular, greyish-white pores. The mushrooms will yield a yellow-brown to ochre-brown spore print. The cap of the mushroom will exude a mild,

pleasant scent, and may measure from 8-15 cm, but may extend up to 20 cm wide.

Stem: The barrel-like stem of the Orange Oak Bolete/Red Aspen Bolete is distinctly cylindrical, and covered all over with distinct reddish-brown scales. The stem tends to widen as it approaches the base, while the interior would be white and solid. It may measure from 10-15 cm in length, and 1.5-3 cm wide.

Look-Alike Species: The Orange Birch Bolete is a mushroom that resembles the Orange Oak Bolete/Red Aspen Bolete closely. The Orange Birch Bolete (L. versipelle), tends to grow and possibly has a mycorrhizal relationship with the birch tree, whereas, the L. aurantiacum species tends to grow with the oak, poplar and aspen trees. The Versipelle species are larger than the aurantiacum, and have darker scales. The L. albostipitatum is rather large, and has a preferential relationship with the poplar tree on whose base it grows, in addition to this, it is quite rare, and the forager may not encounter this mushroom. The Foxy Bolete (L. vulpinum) is found in Scotland, but is rarely found anywhere else in Great Britain.

Warning: The mushroom can be toxic while still raw. It is necessary to cook the mushroom for 15 minutes as the toxins of the mushroom are destroyed once exposed to heat.

The Orange Oak Bolete or the Red Aspen Bolete are mushrooms that are believed to be related to one another, if not the same species as the only difference is in size, and in the trees where the mushrooms prefer to grow. That said, this is a mushroom that should be treated with extreme caution by the forager, as it can never be eaten raw. The mushroom contains toxins that can cause severe gastrointestinal upsets that last for up to a week. Once cooked however, it has a mild flavour that mixes well and is complemented by other bolete species, and as with the other boletes, it goes well on a crostini, or tossed with a balsamic vinaigrette.

5.24 Orange Birch Bolete

Common Name: Orange Birch Bolete

Scientific Name: Leccinum versipelle

Seasonality: The forager may search for the mushroom in the late summer to fall months.

Location: The mushroom prefers to grow in forests, where it has shown a possibly mycorrhizal relationship with the birch tree only. It has a widespread distribution throughout Great Britain.

Growth: The Orange Birch Bolete typically grows in small clusters.

Cap: While young, the cap of the Orange Birch Bolete is hemispherical or shaped like a bun. It does manage to retain the bun-like shape, although this might be slightly flatter as it matures.

The texture of the cap resembles that of fine felt, and is coloured bright orange, where the flesh is white that discolours into a sooty grey colour upon exposure to air. The skin of the cap tends to overhang on the margins. The underside of the cap would reveal adnexed tubes that are coloured a dirty-white, that darken to a reddish-black once cut into. The pores that are on the underside are small, angular and are greyish-white in colour. The mushroom yields on ochre-brown spore print. The cap has a mild scent and may measure up to 8-15 cm wide though some may be up to 20 cm wide.

Stem: The barrel-like stem of the Orange Birch Bolete is covered in black scales, and conceals a solidly white flesh that turns soot grey once exposed to air. The stem tends to be swollen at the base and may measure 10-15 cm long, and from 1.5 – 4 cm wide though some specimens are up to 5 cm wide. Younger specimens have very dark stems.

Look-Alike Species: The Orange Birch Bolete is a mushroom that resembles the Orange Oak Bolete/Red Aspen Bolete closely. The Orange Birch Bolete (L. versipelle), tends to grow and possibly has a mycorrhizal relationship with the birch tree, whereas, the L. aurantiacum species tends to grow with the oak, poplar and aspen trees. The Versipelle species are larger than the aurantiacum, and have darker scales. The L. albostipitatum is rather large, and has a preferential relationship with the poplar tree on whose base it grows, in addition to this, it is quite rare, and the forager may not encounter this mushroom. The Foxy Bolete (L. vulpinum) is found in Scotland, but is rarely found anywhere else in Great Britain.

Warning: The mushroom can be toxic while still raw. It is necessary to cook the mushroom for 15 minutes as the toxins of the mushroom are destroyed once exposed to heat.

The Orange Birch Bolete is similar to the Red Aspen Bolete or the Orange Oak Bolete in its classification that sometimes the two are grouped together based on their shared characteristics, with the difference in their size and their preferred choice of trees on whose bases to grow on. Unlike the Orange Oak Bolete however, the Orange Birch Bolete is not as heavily favoured as other bolete species such as the Penny Bun and the Summer Bolete as the flavour is not quite robust. The mushroom may be eaten in its entirety, however, some specimens have tough stems, and these often have to be discarded, if the cap is the only usable part of the mushroom. It may be used as other boletes however, though the flavour is quite mild. It is still great on toast and as a tossed salad with a vinaigrette. It is imperative however, that the mushroom be cooked for 15 minutes before it is used as heat can destroy the toxins concealed within the mushroom.

5.25 Brown Birch Bolete

Common Name: Brown Birch Bolete

Scientific Name: Leccinum scabrum

Seasonality: The forager may search for the mushroom in the late summer to fall months.

Location: The mushroom prefers to grow in forests, where it has shown a preference for birch trees, as befits its name, where it thrives on the damp ground. It has a widespread distribution though it tends to disfavour areas that are too northerly in their climate.

Growth: The Brown Birch Bolete may be encountered by the forager either singly, in small clusters with other Brown Birch Boletes, or in a troop of mushrooms.

Cap: While young, the cap of the Brown Birch Bolete starts off shaped like a bun or hemispherical, but as it matures, it gradually becomes convex, and then flatter. It is soft and sticky to the touch when wet, and the skin of the mushroom cap overhangs the margins. The flesh of the mushroom is white, and it usually does not discolour upon exposure to air. The undersides would show soft, sinuate, greyish white tubes that gradually darken, and if bruised would discolour brown. The tubes terminate at small, angular pores that have the same colours as the tubes. The mushroom yields a brown spore print. The cap has a mild and pleasant scent. It may measure 6-15 cm, but some specimens measure up to 20 cm wide.

Stem: The rather thin stem of the Brown Birch Bolete is covered with scales coloured grey to black. The interior of the flesh is white, and it does not discolour upon exposure to air, though some specimens of the Brown Birch Bolete turn pink. The scales on the stem are arranged in branched lines. The stem measures 10-20 cm long, and up to 1-3 cm wide.

Look-Alike Species: The Brown Birch Bolete does not have any toxic species that are similar to it. There are other species of mushrooms however, that are still edible that do bear similar characteristics to this mushroom. An important characteristic to remember with this mushroom is that it only grows in proximity to Birch trees, any other mushroom that looks like the Brown Birch Bolete but does not grow near a birch tree is not this mushroom. Despite this, the Greyshank and Mottled Boletes (L. cyanobasileucum and L. variicolor) respectively may be found on birch trees as well. The Hazel Bolete is a species that only grows near Hazel trees, while the Slate Bolete only thrives near Poplar trees. The Ghost Bolete (L.holopus), has a paler cap by comparison and grows on a preferred substrate of sphagnum moss and on damp ground. The forager is not permitted to collect the Ghost Bolete, as it has little culinary contribution, and it is a rare species. The Leccinum oxydabile is another species that grows with spruce and birch trees.

Warning: This is a mushroom that is suitable for the beginner, though the culinary use of this mushroom is not as favourable compared to that of the Penny Bun. The mushroom does not keep well and should be used as soon as it is collected.

The Brown Birch Bolete is a mushroom that a beginner can easily pick out and identify from most mushrooms, though the effort is deemed not to be worthwhile as the mushroom is not as robustly flavoured as other boletes in its family. One can find the Brown Birch Bolete at the base of the Birch Trees, with which it seems to have a preferential relationship with, and with whom it shares a similar colouration with its greyish white pores, grey black scales that contrast with the white stem, and its brown cap. That said, the forager has to be careful in its identification as there are mushrooms that belong to the Bolete family that also grow among Birch trees. However, the Brown Birch Bolete by contrast tends to grow near Birch, whereas the Greyshank and Mottled Boletes may be found elsewhere. The stem is quite

fibrous so one may have to excise the stem before the mushroom can be cooked. Once properly identified, the forager should choose those specimens that are both young and firm. The flavour is deemed to underwhelm the palate of the forager, when one is accustomed to the more robust flavour of the Penny Bun and the Summer Bolete. Despite that, the mild flavour of the mushroom is still suited when sauteed and paired with toast, or tossed together with a balsamic vinaigrette. The mushroom cannot be kept as it decays rather quickly. Use the mushrooms as soon as they have been harvested.

5.26 Slippery Jack

Common Name: Slippery Jack

Scientific Name: Suillus luteus

Seasonality: The forager may search for the mushroom in the late summer to fall months.

Location: The mushroom prefers to grow in coniferous forests beneath pine trees, though the forager may also find the Slippery Jack in pine tree plantations and in gardens. Its preference for pine trees is an important characteristic in its identification, as it prefers to thrive near them, on acidic soil. The Slippery Jack is a common mushroom frequently found by the foragers in Great Britain and Ireland.

Growth: The Slippery Jack typically prefers to grow in a troop with other Slippery Jacks.

Cap: While young, the cap of the Slippery Jack starts off as bun-shaped/hemispherical or a conical cap, where it begins to be more convex as it matures. The name of the mushroom comes from the slippery, slimy texture of the cap, when it is wet. If the mushroom is dry, it is quite shiny but has a wrinkled appearance. The flesh of the cap is white to pale-yellow and firm, and is not known to discolour upon exposure to air. The underside of the mushroom would reveal pale lemon yellow to white tubes, that terminate at round, yellow pores that darken. The spore print of this

mushroom is ochre brown. The cap measures 5-10 cm wide, but may reach widths of up to 15 cm. It has a faint scent of mushroom.

Stem: The stout stem of the Slippery Jack can be shaped like a cylinder or a club, with a pale-yellow exterior and a white to pale yellow interior that does not discolour. The stem has a large purple-tinged ring, where the ring itself is white on its surface, and purple underneath. The lower stem below the ring darkens into purple as the mushroom matures, and has pale red-brown stripes or spots. The stem is short and thick. It may measure 5-10 cm long, and 1 cm wide.

Look-Alike Species: There are other potential species of the Suillus genera, but the forager should not worry about this as the entire genera of species are edible.

Warning: This is a mushroom whose cap should be peeled before it is cooked, as the cap contains substances that may induce mild stomach upsets in sensitive individuals.

The Slippery Jack is a particular species that has developed a mycorrhizal relationship with pine trees of various species and is widely considered to be a pioneer species. This is due to the fact that the Slippery Jack is one of the first fungi to sprout in pine plantations, as long as there are pine trees on which it can grow beneath. The mushroom is identifiable by not only its slimy cap, but also the purple colouration of its stem, the purple underside of its ring, and the lemon-yellow or pale-yellow pores that contrast with the purple colour of the mushroom. It is advised however, to pick the mushroom in dry weather so as to avoid the excessive production of slime on the mushroom cap.

The mushroom should have the cap skin peeled off first before it is applied to any mushroom recipe as the substance on the slime is known to cause gastrointestinal symptoms, that may upset sensitive individuals. Once peeled, they may be preserved through a pickle, or dried. The mild flavour may be brought out once the mushroom is pan-fried, or used to add body to soups and stews. It is not advised however, to eat the mushroom raw.

5.27 Bovine Bolete

Common Name: Bovine Bolete, Jersey Cow

Scientific Name: Suillus bovinus

Seasonality: The forager may search for the mushroom in the middle to late fall months. It may also be found as early as the late summer months, though this is dependent upon location.

Location: The mushroom prefers to grow on a preferred substrate of moss and leaf litter derived from pine trees, on a variety of soils though it prefers sandy soils. It is a species commonly associated with the Scots Pine but may also be found with other two-needled pine trees, or in coniferous forests.

Growth: The Bovine Bolete typically prefers to grow in a troop with other Bovine Boletes.

Cap: While young, the cap of the Bovine Bolete starts off as a convex cap, but flattens as it begins to mature. It has the colour of a Jersey cow – an orange to pale-brown colour or rusty-brown colour, hence, its other name, and tends to become paler in colour as it approaches the margins of the cap. The cap, if wet, is greasy and slimy to the touch, but becomes sticky or shiny when dry. The flesh of the cap varies between white and yellow, but discolours to a brown-blue colour once exposed to air, the flesh is soft to the touch. The underside of the cap would reveal olive-coloured to dirty-yellow compound tubes that terminate at large, angular, pale olive pores.

The spore print of the mushroom is an olive brown. The cap has a mild scent of mushrooms. It may measure from 3-7cm, though some specimens reach up to 15 cm.

Stem: The stems of the Bovine Bolete are quite short and are sometimes not visible from the ground if one happens to come across the Bovine Bolete. They are however dirty-yellow in colour, shaped like a cylinder, and have a solid interior though the flesh is soft. The flesh of the stem is white to yellow but discolours to a brown-blue upon exposure to air. The stem slightly tapers, but becomes slightly bulbous at the base, and is usually bent. It may measure 3-6 cm long, and 0.5-1 cm wide.

Look-Alike Species: There are other potential species of the Suillus genera, but the forager should not worry about this as the entire genera of species are edible.

Warning: There are no specific warnings as to the consumption and harvest of the Bovine Bolete. The general practice for the Suillus genera of fungi however is to peel the cap.

This is a mushroom that has been known to be edible since the dawn of the Roman Empire. The other name of this mushroom is the Jersey Cow, and from the colour of the cap, one can make the reasonable assumption that the cap resembles the hide of the aforementioned Cow. While there are no specific attributions that pertain directly to the Bovine Bolete, a common practice for the foragers who pick any mushroom from this family of mushrooms is to peel the cap as the sliminess tends to be a deterrent to those who would consume the mushroom, and the slime would also cause gastrointestinal symptoms in the unwary eater.

Once peeled however, it is a very useful mushroom known to add body to other pre-packed mixed mushrooms of which it commonly forms a part of. Once cooked, the mushroom tends to discolour to pink. It can be dried as well and would be able to add more substance to other dried mixed mushrooms. When one chooses a mushroom, opt for the younger and firmer specimens. This mushroom may also be used as with other boletes.

5.28 Giant Puffball

Common Name: Giant Puffball

Scientific Name:

Langermannia gigantea /

Calvatea gigantea

Seasonality: The forager may search for the mushroom in the midsummer to fall months.

Location: The mushroom prefers to grow on the pasturelands, especially where cattle have grazed, though it is not limited to this location. The Giant Puffball may also be found in other types of grasslands, in gardens, and on occasion in woodlands and the sides of the road. It may also be found at the edges of forests and in the parklands. It is present in most areas that present with a temperate climate, and as such, may have a wider distribution in the British Isles. It prefers soils that are rich in nutrients.

Growth: The Giant Puffball prefers to thrive in fairy rings, where one may find other puffballs, though with due consideration for the size, one specimen is sufficient enough to feed an entire family.

Cap: The Giant Puffball is not more of a typical mushroom per se, as it does not have a cap. The most visible part of the Giant Puffball is the very large body that is visible above ground, which is often coloured white or cream while the body is still young, but gradually turns dark brown once

the mushroom begins to mature. The body has a loose connection to the ground via a mycelial thread that connects it to the fungi concealed in the ground beneath. The outer skin of the cap is leathery and smooth to the touch, and it may rot away. The flesh is firm, and is only considered edible while white and firm. Any form of discolouration in the interior should be an indicator that the current specimen should be discarded. Though there may not be a visible underside to inspect, the spore print of the mushroom should be an olive-brown colour. The body may measure up to 20-50 cm though there are larger specimens that reach up to 70 cm across.

Stem: The Giant Puffball has no visible stalk or stem, as the most visible part of the mushroom is the entire fruit body.

Look-Alike Species: There are no poisonous species that can be mistaken for the Giant Puffball, and other species of Puffball cannot be mistaken due to the size of the body of the Giant Puffball by comparison. The largest puffball species that is not the giant puffball is still edible regardless.

Warning: There are no specific warnings as to the consumption and harvest of the Giant Puffball. As for puffballs in general, it is recommended that they only be consumed if the flesh is still a pure white and firm. Otherwise, consumption of discoloured flesh would result in gastrointestinal symptoms.

There is perhaps no mushroom that could be mixed up with the Giant Puffball, and one could hardly miss it, if the mushroom happens to be roughly the size of a football. The size is of such immensity that one puffball specimen is sufficient enough to feed a large family or a part of mushroom eaters. The mushroom has a strong flavour, and does not have a specific scent quality attributed to it. Most foragers describe the texture of the flesh as similar to cheese – though with the varieties of cheese available, the closest cheese would be at least one that is semi-firm; or better yet, tofu. Because of the flavour profile and perhaps more due to its size, the more conventional cooks are able to hollow out the puffballs, and stuff them with a mixture of beef or pork mince, diced bacon and various vegetables before the puffball is roasted in its entirety. The more conventional cook on the other hand, can simply treat the puffball as if it were a cut of meat and slice it into thick cutlets, breaded and shallow-fried with a crumb mixture to

serve as an erstwhile vegetarian schnitzel, or coated in a mix of dried herbs and fried as well. The more adventurous cook however, can slice the body into a steak and use it as a crust for a pizza, with the tomato sauce on top, and their desired toppings. Since the mushroom has no gluten, it is at least a gluten-free pizza, though any allergies would have to be accounted for. The utility of this mushroom is such, that the soups and stews in which this mushroom is normally used seem rather plebeian, but at least still comforting and hearty, by comparison. This mushroom may be dried, though one would have to slice it thinly to make the preservation more effective.

5.29 Meadow Puffball

Common Name:

Meadow Puffball

Scientific Name:

Vascellum pratense / Lycoperdon pratense

Seasonality: The forager may search for the mushroom in the summer to fall months.

Location: The mushroom prefers to grow on soil and on the fertile humus, where it prefers to thrive in grassy tracts of land. It may also be found on downlands, parks and even in the garden. The Meadow Puffball is known to also thrive in the heaths.

Growth: The Meadow Puffball prefers to grow in a troop with other Meadow Puffballs.

Cap: The Meadow Puffball is not as large as the Giant Puffball; it is relatively minuscule by comparison. Upon observation of the cap, it is less of a ball, as the top tends to be quite flat, and has a mealy texture, where the skin of the Meadow Puffball is covered in little spines. The flesh of the Meadow Puffball has a spongy interior, though it is quite fertile. Inspection of the pores of the flesh would reveal fine pores, separated by a thin section of tissue. The colour of the mushroom body starts off as white, but as it matures, it transitions to a yellow to pale brown colour. The mushroom has

no discernible scent or underside, and may measure 1.5-4 cm high, and from 2-4.5 cm wide though some specimens have reached a width of 6 cm. The spore print yielded is grey olive to olive brown in colour.

Stem: The Meadow Puffball may be dominated by the fruit body, however at the base is a rather short, squat stem of little discernible characteristics save for its brevity.

Look-Alike Species: There are no poisonous species that can be mistaken for the Meadow Puffball. Other species of puffball are edible though their palatability as an edible may sometimes be the point of contention with foragers.

Warning: There are no specific warnings as to the consumption and harvest of the Meadow Puffball. As for puffballs in general, it is recommended that they only be consumed if the flesh is still a pure white and firm. Otherwise, consumption of discoloured flesh would result in gastrointestinal symptoms. The Meadow Puffball is a smaller relative of the Giant Puffball and is rather minuscule when compared side by side with the Giant Puffball. With that in mind, it does not also carry the flavour that most foragers would tend to associate with Puffball species, and most often eschew it due to the nondescript flavour that one tastes when the mushroom is consumed. Regardless of the mild flavour of the mushroom, it still remains an edible mushroom that one can work with, and though it is mild, it can still be sliced and dipped in a tempura batter to make the mushroom more worthwhile for consumption. If one desires to pick the mushroom, only choose those specimens that are firm, and young. Mushrooms with a discoloured interior should be discarded.

5.30 Deceiver

Common Name: Deceiver, the Deceiver

Scientific Name: Laccaria laccata

Seasonality: The forager may search for the mushroom in the summer to early winter months.

Location: The mushroom prefers to grow on dampened soil, beneath the trees in forests or in the parklands. It also has the tendency to grow in bog-like places in proximity to willow trees. The forager may find the Deceiver in the woods, heaths, moors, and gardens, where it has a widespread distribution across the British Isles.

Growth: The Deceiver prefers to grow in a troop with other Deceivers.

Cap: The Deceiver, is so named as the mushroom to include the cap itself has a variety of colours that it makes its appearance in. Regardless of that, the mushroom cap while still young, starts off with a convex shape, though as it matures, it gradually becomes flatter, and on occasion may end up as a concave cap, that has undergone some form of distortion from its original shape while it was still young. When wet, the cap of the mushroom has a line at the margins, and is coloured reddish brown to pink, or a variation of these two colours, whereupon it becomes paler when the mushroom dries. The flesh of this mushroom is thin, and is the same colour as the cap. The underside of the cap would reveal pinkish gills, that are sometimes covered with white spores. The gills are quite thick and are distant from one another,

with an adnate or decurrent attachment to the stem. The spore print of the cap is white. The cap may measure 1-5 cm wide, and does not have a specific scent attributed to it. The flesh of the cap is not known to discolour upon exposure to air.

Stem: The Deceiver has a thin, yet tough, fibrous stem that is often discarded by foragers before it is consumed. It may be twisted, or be wavy in its structure, and has the same colour as the cap of the mushroom and has white vertical stripes that run the length of the stem. The stem may measure 2-6 cm long and 0.2-0.5 cm wide.

Look-Alike Species: From the name of the mushroom, and the variability of the colour, this table cell is insufficient enough to list all the mushrooms that bear similarities to the Deceiver, hence the moniker that is attributed to this particular mushroom. More veteran mushroom foragers have, appropriately enough, been deceived by the appearance of this mushroom as it can be mistaken for a lot of other mushrooms given that its cap can have a variable appearance apart from its colouration.

Warning: The forager would have to exercise caution, as though most species that belong to the genera of the Deceivers are edible, but because of the variability of their appearance, it is entirely possible to mistake the Deceiver for virtually any other mushroom that may be either toxic or simply of a substance that can induce gastrointestinal disorders.

The Deceiver might be a delicious bane for even the most veteran mushroom foragers in one’s local due to its rather chameleonic appearance that has given rise to its name. The forager can expect then that the Deceiver requires a tremendous amount of effort to be sure that the mushroom that was picked was the deceiver and not some similar offshoot of the mushroom that looks like the Deceiver. The problem with this mushroom does not lie with its edibility, but rather, because it can look like several other mushrooms that may have various effects on the body due to their inedibility, the mushroom would require a lot of identification to ensure that the Deceiver is the mushroom on hand, and not some other mushroom. Despite this however, the deceiver makes for a good fried mushroom, but bring out their best flavour when used in soups and stews, basically any culinary preparation that involves a liquid where the

mushroom can infuse its flavour. Subsequently, the mushroom is among those that are able to be preserved, as the mushroom dries well. The mild flavour of the Deceiver allows it to complement other mushrooms in any mixed mushroom dish, though one should discard the stem as it is simply too fibrous to be digested by the human body.

5.31 Hedgehog Fungus

Common Name: Hedgehog Fungus; Hedgehog Mushroom; Wood Hedgehog; Pied de Mouton (French)

Scientific Name: Hydnum repandum

Seasonality: The forager may search for the mushroom only in the Autumn or Fall Months, though on occasion it may be found in the late summer months, to winter in the more southerly areas.

Location: The mushroom prefers to grow in the woodlands, where it prefers to thrive on mossy soil, beneath hardwood or coniferous trees. It is often found in very large rings. It has a common distribution in the southeastern part of England, and along the Welsh and English frontiers. It is uncommon in central England, and in the East Anglia region, but is frequently found in the remainder of Great Britain and Ireland.

Growth: The Hedgehog Mushroom prefers to grow in large rings, in troops or in large clusters.

Cap: The Hedgehog Mushroom starts off with a convex cap that gradually flattens and develops a slight depression in its centre as it matures. It has irregularly shaped lobes on its cap, and may fuse with other lobes. The texture of the cap is slightly velvety, and is cream to pale ochre coloured. The underside of the cap would reveal spines, rather than gills or pores, with each spine approximately 0.6 cm long. They are coloured white buy may also be slightly pink/yellow in colour. The spines are easily detached

and have a decurrent attachment to the stem of the mushroom. The spore print yielded is white, and the cap has a faint, yet pleasant smell. The flesh of the mushroom is white, though it discolours to yellow at the base of the stem. The cap may measure 5-15 cm wide.

Stem: The Hedgehog Mushroom has a large stem that has an off-centre attachment to the cap, where the spines on the underside of the cap run down the length of the stem. It has a colour paler than that of the cap. It may measure 3-7 cm long and 1-3 cm wide.

Look-Alike Species: The Hedgehog Mushroom has no poisonous species that are found in Europe. There are mushrooms however, that bear the similarly spiny attributes that the Hedgehog Mushroom has, such as the genera of the Bankera, Hydnellum and the Phellodon.

Warning: There are no attributable warnings for the Hedgehog Mushroom.

The Hedgehog Mushroom is deemed to be a prized mushroom to foragers, as it is of noteworthy commercial importance. This is because the fruit body of the mushrooms are quite resilient and last long, and are rarely if never infested with any grubs or any other insect larvae. Because of their long seasonality, it is also possible for the forager to find the Hedgehog Mushroom in the winter months, when there are little to no other mushrooms that may be foraged. It is possible to eat the mushroom, but one must be warned as it has a bitter flavour. Upon exposure to heat however, the bitterness of the mushroom becomes ameliorated by the heat, and becomes a sweet flavour. The forager should take care not to cook the mushroom for too long as the mushroom has a lower water content than most other mushrooms and would dry out a lot. Alternatively, one may also blanch the mushroom before fried to reduce the intensity of the bitterness and to reduce the exposure of the mushroom to heat.

The spines of the mushroom are the most bitter part of the entire fungus, and are easily detached and may be discarded. To detach the spines, one may use the back of a teaspoon or a blunt knife. Do not place the spines with other mushrooms as they have the tendency to stick to other mushrooms. The Hedgehog has a similar flavour profile to the Chanterelle mushroom and may be a reasonable substitute for this mushroom. If one wants to preserve this, the forager should note that the mushroom does not

dry well, it may however be pickled, and once cooked, they may be frozen. One may also salt the mushrooms to preserve them. The mushrooms do well in egg dishes, and in dumplings.

The Hedgehog is a mushroom that the forager will know to be reliable, as it has a predictable pattern of appearance in areas where it is known to thrive. Where most mushrooms only have a relatively ephemeral period in which one can safely pick and consume them, and where one would have to contend with the mushrooms infested with insects and their larvae, the hedgehog mushroom seems to have perfected the art of resilience against insects and other pests that may think of it as a food source. They tend to grow in the late summer months, and in Great Britain and Ireland, the forager may find these mushrooms even in December.

5.32 Trooping Funnel

Common Name: Rickstone Funnel Cap, Trooping Funnel, Fungo di San Martino (Italian)

Scientific Name: Clitocybe geotropa (syn. Infundiibulicybe geotropa)

Seasonality: The forager may search for the mushroom only in the Fall months.

Location: The mushroom prefers to grow in forests, where it prefers to thrive in proximity to hardwood trees, but may also be found on occasion in forests populated by coniferous trees. It is a mushroom that is common throughout Great Britain and Ireland, especially in the southern portions of these islands.

Growth: The Trooping Funnel grows in a fairy ring, though it may also be found in troops with other Funnel Caps.

Cap: The Trooping Funnel, while young, is initially flat, with a distinct umbo, which then develops into a depression before the cap itself transitions into a funnel-shape with inrolled margins. The surface of the mushroom is dry, and has a smooth, or finely velvety texture. The cap of the mushroom is cream coloured, but may also be a pale fresh brown colour. The flesh of the cap is a firm white colour, that does not discolour upon exposure to air. The underside of the mushroom would reveal gills that have the same colour as the cap, usually a cream to pale brown colour but may also be buff coloured, or a paler buff colour. The gills are crowded together

and have a deep, decurrent attachment to the stem of the mushroom. The spore print yielded by the mushroom is white. The cap does have a sweetly, pleasant scent and flavour, and may measure 5-20 cm wide.

Stem: The Trooping Funnel has the same pale flesh brown to buff colour of the cap, and has the gills of the cap attached deeply decurrent to it. At the base of the stem is a white felt base, where the stem tends to be cylindrical or taper upwards. The base of the stem is slightly bulbous and the overall texture of the stem is tough and fibrous. It may measure 8-20 cm long, and 1-3 cm wide.

Look-Alike Species: A general rule with the lookalike species of the Trooping Funnel is to avoid funnels that are smaller than the Trooping Funnel itself. Among the species to be avoided include the:

• Frosty Funnel, a deadly funnel mushroom that is smaller than the Trooping Funnel. It has a very strong scent, a woolly base as opposed to the fine felt base of the Trooping Funnel, a cap that looks like it has been touched by frost, and the lack of an umbo that is distinct to the Trooping Funnel.

• Livid Pinkgills, may be mistaken for the Trooping Funnel, especially by novice foragers. It does have a stronger, less pleasant smell, and has pink spores as opposed to the white spores of the Trooping Funnel. It may have no umbo, or at least a broader, and blunter umbo.

• Club Foot, has a darker cap as opposed to the pale flesh brown to buff colour of the Trooping Funnel, and has a swollen stem base, and has a very offensive taste.

The Trooping Funnel also has edible lookalike mushrooms such as the:

• Giant Funnel and the Leucopaxillus paradoxus. The Giant Funnel tends to grow in the grassy areas, and true to its name, may reach extraordinary proportions with widths up to 40 cm.

• Alexander’s Funnel is a critically endangered species in the United Kingdom, that may be mistaken for the Trooping Funnel due to its stem. It

is unknown if it is truly edible, though given its rarity, it would be offensive to pick it.

• Clouded Funnels have a darker cap, and a stronger smell, as opposed to the paler cap and the milder scent of the Trooping Funnel.

Warning: The forager would have to discard the stems if they are attached to older specimens of the Trooping Funnel.

The forager would have to keep an eye on the distinct central umbo or the raised mass in the centre of the mushroom that makes the cap of the Trooping Funnel a distinct species from the other mushrooms it could potentially be mistaken for. Subsequently, the mushroom is deemed to have a milder flavour, that seems to complement white beans when sauteed with it, or used in soups and stews. It may also be roasted or fried.

5.33 Honey Fungus

Common Name: Honey Fungus

Scientific Name: Armillaria mellea (Armillaria gallica)

Seasonality: The forager may search for the mushroom only in the fall months. It may be on occasion found as early as the late summer months to the early winter months.

Location: The mushroom prefers to grow on dead or decayed pieces of hardwood trees as its preferred substrate. It may also be found on softwood or coniferous trees, where it thrives in wooded areas, parklands and gardens. It may also be found on weakened hardwood trees, and shrubs. It has a widespread distribution, where it is a very commonly encountered species.

Growth: The Honey Fungus prefers to grow in clusters or scattered all over its favoured substrate.

Cap: The Honey Fungus initially starts off with a convex cap that gradually flattens as it matures. It has a honey yellow to brown coloured cap where the cap is often covered with rings of brown flecks that darken towards the centre of the cap. The flesh of the cap is white and does not discolour upon exposure to air. The underside of the cap would reveal white gills that darken to yellow and finish as a spotted reddish-brown colour, that are crowded together with an adnate to decurrent attachment to the stem. The spore print yielded is pale cream to white, and the cap has a strong scent. It may measure up 3-12 cm in width.

Stem: The Honey Fungus has an initially convex stem that becomes flatter and wavy as it matures. It has a tough and fibrous texture, with a white, solid interior, and a pale-yellow brown exterior. The stem is pale at the top, and darker at the base, where the stem has a persistent, thin, hanging ring that ranges in colour from pale white, to yellow to greyish. The stem measures 4-12 cm long, and 1-3 cm wide.

Look-Alike Species: The entire genera of Honey Mushrooms, the Armillaria species have some form of confusion associated with each other due to their highly similar appearances. The Honey Fungus is one of the least problematic members of its genus and should not be mistaken for the Dark Honey Fungus, as the latter species is the more complicated species of the genera. The Sulphur Tuft may be mistaken for the Honey Mushroom, though the distinction could be made with the green to blue coloured gills, and the absence of the brown flecks that characterise the caps of the Honey Mushrooms. The Sheathed Woodtuft is another lookalike species, though it is an edible one. The Funeral Bell though, is the more dangerous lookalike species, as it is also brown in colour and has a preference for decayed wood. It is smaller in size, and prefers to grow in troops, rather than in tufts or tight clusters. It also has a more fragile structure, and a less fibrous stem.

Warning: The forager would have to exercise caution in the selection of the Honey Mushroom. It is best when the mushrooms are harvested while the caps are still young.

The Honey Mushroom finds more favour with inhabitants of Continental Europe, as opposed to the inhabitants of the British Isles. The species of this genera of fungi are reviled by many a gardener as these mushrooms is said to be parasitic, given their preferred substrate on trees, from which these mushrooms derive many of their nutrients. Those of Eastern European descent are more accustomed to the selection and use of the Honey Mushroom, as those who are unused to the mushroom often attribute to it several gastrointestinal symptoms that may sometimes occur in people who happen to be particularly sensitive to it. However, despite that, this would be the worst symptom, and there are no more severe symptoms associated with these genera of mushrooms.

Culinarily, the mushrooms have a very strong flavour, though the flavour is unpleasant when raw. If one does encounter the mushroom, it does well as a mushroom tart. A better method would be to place the mushrooms at the bottom of a roasting pan with a joint of meat that is rich in fat (be it intramuscular fat or subcutaneous fat), where the mushrooms would be able to crisp up in the rendered fat from the cut of meat, and come out particularly sublime, as they took on the flavour of the meat from which the fat was rendered from. The honey mushroom does well with pork dishes for this matter.

Alternatively, for a quick meal, one can simply boil the mushrooms for 3 minutes before the mushrooms are drained well. Discard the water. Shallow fry the mushroom with a splash of olive oil in a pan for 10 minutes until such time that the slimy exterior of the mushrooms has dissipated. They can be sauteed together with some aromatics and deglazed with a splash of sherry. The mushroom does preserve well when pickled, and it also does well in a stew. To preserve the mushroom, one may pickle, or cook the mushrooms in their preferred method and freeze them.

5.34 Wood Blewit

Common Name: Wood Blewit

Scientific Name: Lepista nuda (syn. Clitocybe nuda)

Seasonality: The forager may search for the mushroom only in the middle to late autumn months. There are foragers however, who have noted that it can appear at any time of the year so one could keep an eye out for it.

Location: The mushroom prefers to grow in areas that are rich in nutrients, such as compost heaps, and the leaf litter mulch derived from the leaves of fallen trees, be they hardwood or coniferous trees. The forager may also find these in the woodlands, parklands, gardens, and on the sides of the road. It is a mushroom commonly found in Great Britain and Ireland, but it cannot be found in northern Wales and in the highlands of Scotland.

Growth: The Wood Blewit has a preference for fairy rings, or may grow in a singular line as a troop with other Wood Blewits.

Cap: The Wood Blewit starts off initially as a convex cap, that gradually flattens and develops a broad umbo, before the centre of the cap develops into a depression or becomes funnel-shaped. It has an irregular shape once matured, especially around the edges of the caps, where the margins are tinged a blue lilac before they fade to a grey brown colour. The cap can be hygrophanous – the cap becomes more transparent the wetter it is, or opaquer the drier it is. The flesh of the cap is grey, but marbled with lilac, especially in the stem area. The underside of the cap would reveal gills that

have the same blue lilac to violet or violet brown colour, that are sinuate, with an adnate or emarginate attachment. The mushroom yields a pale pink to dingy pink spore print. The cap may measure 5-20 cm wide, and has a strong scent, a rich and flowery perfume that is reminiscent of frozen orange juice. The flavour of the cap is quite nutty.

Stem: The Wood Blewit has a stout stem that becomes swollen at the base where the stem tends to grow into the leaf litter or the chosen substrate that the forager has found the mushroom in. It is streaked with purple. If one dissects the interior, it has the same greyish flesh that is marbled with lilac tones. The stem measures 4-10 cm long, and 1.5-3 cm wide.

Look-Alike Species: One of the key characteristics that aids the forager in the identification of the Wood Blewit from other species that may look like it is the scent, given that it was mentioned that the scent of the Wood Blewit is strong and flowery, reminiscent to that of citrus juice. That in mind, the forager who has a weak sense of smell, or a deadened one, should not forage for this mushroom. The Wood Blewit resembles a series of mushrooms referred to as the Webcaps, where the Bruising Webcap bears the closest resemblance to this mushroom. It is unknown if the Bruising Webcap is edible or poisonous, so one should exercise caution with the identification of the mushroom, as the genera of the Webcaps have species that are naturally full of toxins. The key now is by scent. The other mushroom that the Wood Blewit could be mistaken for is the Sordid Blewit.

Warning: The forager would have to note that some individuals have exhibited allergic reactions to the Wood Blewit. This reaction is worsened if the mushroom is consumed raw, so it is advised that one always cook the mushroom before consumption.

The Wood Blewit is perhaps one of the most aesthetically unique edible mushrooms that the forager may encounter as its greyish to lilac tones simply make it stand out from the earthy colours of other mushrooms. It does make a beautiful contrast against the cream and earth colours of other mushrooms, and it helps that it also has a unique flavour and scent that make it a delicacy among foragers. That said, the forager who embarks on a search for this mushroom should have a keen sense of smell, there is no point to exert any effort in the search for this mushroom if one has a

deadened sense of smell, has a weak sense of smell, or simply has colds. One of the more unique characteristics of this mushroom that helps it stand out from its other look alike species is the flowery perfume that brings to mind a cold glass of fresh squeezed orange juice.

The Wood Blewit is known to be a mushroom that lends itself well to stews, as with other species of blewit mushrooms. An alternate means to cook this mushroom however, is to bread with egg and panko breadcrumbs, and fried. One can experiment with a light tempura batter if they wish to as well. The mushrooms can also be pickled in a half and half solution of vinegar and hard cider and served chilled with some sliced onions, and herbs. The mushrooms are meaty enough that some of the English have used it as a substitute for tripe in dishes that call for it. Because the mushrooms have a strong flavour, they do well in confits of game meats, where the mushroom has been served as a ragout on the side. Once cooked, it also makes a nice, warm salad component.

5.35 Field Blewit

Common Name: Field Blewit

Scientific Name: Lepista saeva (syn. Clitocybe saeva; Tricholoma personatum; Lepista personata)

Seasonality: The forager may search for the mushroom from the fall to the midwinter months.

Location: The mushroom prefers to grow in soils that are rich and calcareous – that is to say, that the soils are rich in lime. It has the tendency to grow in grassy areas, such as areas used for pasture. It may also be found on the sides of the road, in the grassy areas of parks, and sometimes on the soil of forests that are rich in lime. The mushroom has a wide distribution in the southern parts of Great Britain and Ireland, and becomes rarer the further north one travels.

Growth: The Field Blewit has a preference for well-developed fairy rings, or may grow in a singular line as a small troop with other Field Blewits.

Cap: The Field Blewit starts off with a convex or hemispherical cap, that gradually flattens as it matures and becomes wavy. The colour of the cap tends to be a pale leathery colour or at least a dull clay pink. The cap has a slightly greasy texture and the margins of the cap tends to be quite smooth. The flesh of the cap is off-white in colour marbled with a dark grey or tan colour. The underside of the cap would reveal gills that are the same pale leather or cream or dull clay pink colour of the cap, crowded together, and

are sinuate in appearance. The spore print yielded by the mushroom is a pale pink colour. The cap measures 5-20 cm wide and has a distinct floral scent that varies in intensity.

Stem: The Field Blewit has a stout, swollen stem that is streaked with purple and has a bright lilac exterior, and flesh that is firm and cream or off-white in colour that are tinged with a pale blue. The stem of the mushroom is quite fibrous and terminates at a swollen base. The stem may measure 3-7 cm long, and 1.5-4 cm wide.

Look-Alike Species: The Field Blewit does not resemble any other mushroom that carries any poisonous qualities. The closest mushroom that may be mistaken for it is the Clouded Funnel Mushroom. Where the Field Blewit has a stem that is streaked with purple, the stem of the Clouded Funnel does not have the violet streaks, has a different scent, and where the Field Blewit prefers to grow in grasslands and pastures; the Clouded Funnel prefers to grow in the woods.

Warning: The forager would have to note that some individuals have exhibited allergic reactions to the Field Blewit. This reaction is worsened if the mushroom is consumed raw, so it is advised that one always cook the mushroom before consumption.

The Field Blewit may not have the same distinct colouration as the more aesthetically unique Wood Blewit, but it is the one that is more highly favoured by mushroom foragers as a collectible species. The collection of the Field Blewit can be chronicled several centuries back as one of the mushrooms that has historically been collected by the English ever since it has been identified as an edible species, and for that alone it has been favoured by many foragers. The Field Blewit has a different flavour profile, as it is a mushroom described to be fairly strong in flavour and has a meaty quality to it. It can be used as with any other mushrooms, or cooked like other blewit species, in a stew, or lightly breaded and fried. The mushroom can be picked in a solution of vinegar and cider and served alongside herbs and onions. The mushroom also does well as a component of a ragout with game meats and as a warm salad.

5.36 Clustered Domecap

Common Name:

Clustered Domecap;

Fried Chicken Mushroom

Scientific Name:

Lyophyllum decastes

Seasonality: The forager may search for the mushroom in the late summer months to the late fall months, where many foragers have noted that it is a late season mushroom.

Location: The mushroom prefers to grow along the open woodland areas, in gardens and in the parklands. It has a tendency for soil that has been disturbed. It may also be found in cemeteries, waste grounds, grassy areas, and footpaths where it prefers to grow in very dense clusters. It has a widespread distribution in Europe.

Growth: The key characteristic of the Clustered Domecap is that it tends to grow in very dense clusters, which the forager should keep an eye out for.

Cap: The caps of the Clustered Domecap, which number in a significant quantity and density are initially bun shaped or hemispherical in appearance. Once the mushroom cap matures however, they begin to flatten and develop a central umbo, and take on an irregular greyish brown shade.

The cap also develops wavy margins, and silver streaks. The cap has a silky texture, and is quite resilient in its structure while the mushroom is still fresh. The flesh of the cap is white, with a greyish tinge. An inspection of the underside would reveal, white or grey gills, with an adnate attachment, that are crowded together. The spore print yielded by the mushroom caps is white, and the scent of the cap overall is reminiscent of chicken. The caps may measure 5-10 cm wide.

Stem: The Clustered Domecap, given its growth in dense clusters, has irregularly shaped stems that fuse towards their end. The white or pale grey stems have a tough and fibrous texture, and tend to darken as they fuse towards a central point. Each individual stem has white flesh with a greyish tinge, and may measure 15 cm long, and 0.5-2.5 cm wide.

Look-Alike Species: One of the key characteristics that aids the forager in the identification of the Clustered Domecap from other species that may look like it is the scent, given that it was mentioned that the scent of the Clustered Domecap is reminiscent to that of chicken. That in mind, the forager who has a weak sense of smell, or a deadened one, should not forage for this mushroom. One of the species that more closely resembles the Clustered Domecap is the Lyophyllum loricatum where the latter species is also edible, however this mushroom tends to fruit in the spring, as opposed to the late summer to late fall appearance of the Clustered Domecap. The Ethereal Domecap (Lyophyllum eustygium) is indeterminate as to its edibility, but it is known to have a bitter flavour, as well as a blue grey colour as opposed to the grey brown of the Clustered Domecap. Lyophyllum fumosum is another similar species, though one can detect that this is not the Clustered Domecap by virtue of the unpleasant scent that it exudes, though despite the scent it is still an edible species. The Smoky Domecap (Lyophyllum gangrenosum), is immediately perceptible as the flesh discolours blue upon exposure to air once cut. The other species of the Lyophyllum genera are more uncommon than the Clustered Domecap. Another species that one would have to look out for are the Grey or Brown Knight Mushrooms, of which several among their genera are poisonous. The distinction is made, as the Clustered Domecap really does grow in very dense clusters. Otherwise if in doubt, the mushroom should be left well alone, unless one can verify for certain that this is the Clustered Domecap.

Warning: The forager would have to note that some individuals have exhibited allergic reactions to the Clustered Domecap. This reaction is worsened if the mushroom is consumed raw, so it is advised that one always cook the mushroom before consumption.

The Clustered Domecap is one of those unique mushrooms that oddly enough, smell and do taste like chicken, hence its alternative moniker as the Fried Chicken Mushroom. That aside, the grey brown caps of the mushrooms are not the distinctive factors that aid in its identification, but rather the density of its growth, as the Clustered Domecap grows only in very dense cluster; and the scent of the mushroom, which smells like Chicken, are the main characteristics that the forager should keep an eye out for, when in the search for this mushroom species.

Its culinary application though, is not one that involves chicken however, as the flavour of the mushroom oddly enough, complements the robust flavour of beef. However, the mild, meaty flavour of the mushroom is sufficiently strong to stand on its own as the entrée of a meal, whereupon it can simply be sauteed in a bit of oil to add flavour and texture to the mushrooms. If one desires to preserve the mushrooms, they would be able to either dry the mushrooms, or cook the mushrooms first before they are frozen in oil. A more unusual method of preservation involves the preservation of the mushrooms in olive oil, in a confit, to form a seal that ensures that no air enters the mushrooms and causes their oxidation.

5.37 The Miller

Common Name: The Miller, Sweetbread Mushroom

Scientific Name: Clitopilus prunulus

Seasonality: The forager may search for the mushroom in the summer months to the late fall months.

Location: The mushroom prefers to grow on soil rich in humus, in the wooded areas that are known to have acidic soils. It may also be found close to trees, in the grasslands. It is suspected to be a parasite of, or has a symbiotic relationship with several types of Boletes, to include the Penny Bun. The mushroom has a widespread distribution in Europe.

Growth: The fruiting bodies of the Miller tend to grow in a troop, or together as a loose cluster.

Cap: The caps of the Miller or Sweetbread Mushroom, if one is familiar with this specialty cut, can vary in size and shape, although the colour will certainly be a white to pale grey in shade. The younger species of the Miller has caps that are hemispherical in shape or may become funnel-shaped with the margins of the cap rolled inwards. The texture of the cap resembles soft leather. The white flesh of the cap and the stem is soft and fragile in texture and does not discolour once exposed to air. The underside of the cap would reveal crowded gills that are white to pale pink in colour, soft in texture, with a strongly decurrent attachment to the stem, that yield a pink spore print – its unique characteristic to aid in its identification. The smell of the mushroom is similar to that of an old mill hence its name. The cap may measure 3-9 cm wide.

Stem: The stem of the Miller mushroom shares the pale grey to white colouration of the cap, and has the same white interior that has a soft, fragile texture that does not discolour upon exposure to air. The gills on the underside of the cap are deeply decurrent to the stem, to which the stem is attached off-centre.

Look-Alike Species: The forager would need to have a keen sense of sight and attention to detail to be able to tell apart the Miller from the look-alike species, the Fool's Funnel, as it is a species that is uncannily similar to the Miller, if one only examines the appearance through the use of photographs. If one were faced with the mushrooms themselves, then the method of identification would be quicker, but this means that the mushroom cannot be simply identified on sight due to its similar appearance to the said mushroom. There are some distinctions that can be made however: The Miller prefers to thrive in the woodlands, and never appears in rings. The Fool's Funnel on the other hand, tends to inhabit the flatter grasslands and always fruits in a ring. The flesh of the mushroom provides a different counterpoint: The Miller has white flesh that is soft and fragile, and has a stronger mealy scent as opposed to the Fool's Funnel. The Miller also produces a pink spore print, as opposed to the white spore print of the Fool's Funnel.

The Frosty Funnel is another mushroom that could be mistaken for the Miller, however, one should exercise caution with this mushroom as it

contains large amounts of muscarine. It grows in the woodlands, the same environment as the Miller, and is slightly larger than the Miller.

Young Livid Pinkgills have been mistaken for the Miller by other foragers. These mushrooms have a fibrous texture, and have a less pleasant smell compared to the Miller. The White Fibrecap is another mushroom that could be mistaken for the Miller, however the gills and scent are different. The Clitopilus scyphoides is a rare species, that is smaller and it is not known if it is edible. Clitopilus pinsitus is not known to be edible, but has a scent that deters the forager from its harvest.

Warning: The forager would have to note that this mushroom would have to be cooked properly before consumption.

One would have to be familiar with the scent of a mill house to determine the identity of the Miller. Due to the potential mistakes that can be made in its identification, it is a mushroom that is best left to more advanced or expert level foragers who are more accustomed to its identification. This is a mushroom wherein one should have a keen sense of sight, and a lot of attention to detail as the details that identify the mushroom are the most essential steps to determine that what one has is the Miller and not one of its more potentially toxic look alike species. If one is familiar with the appearance of Sweetbreads, the Pancreas and Thymus glands of a young pig or cow, then one would understand why the mushroom is referred to as a Sweetbread Mushroom. There is nothing sweet about its appearance, and the scent of the mushroom leaves a lot to be desired. Flavour however, is attributed to be mealy, however, it lends itself well to a light sauté with butter, and use to top toast and drizzled with a squeeze of lemon. The mushroom oddly enough does complement the flavours of marsh samphire. One should not worry about the scent as exposure to heat tends to lessen the intensity of the mealy scent of the mushroom. The mushroom dries well and it can be preserved for a period of time in this manner.

5.38 Shaggy Inkcap

Common Name: Lawyer's Wig, Shaggy Inkcap, Shaggy Mane (in the United States)

Scientific Name: Coprinus comatus

Seasonality: The forager may search for the mushroom only within the fall months.

Location: The mushroom prefers to grow on disturbed soils, where it has a preference for lawns, on the sides of the road, and on the paths in the wooded areas. It may also be found on the edges of paths, and on compost heaps. It has a widespread distribution throughout Europe and the British Isles.

Growth: The fruiting bodies of the Shaggy Inkcap only grow in large troops of the same mushroom.

Cap: The caps of the Shaggy Inkcap start off as ovoid in shape, and white in colour. The surface of the cap is covered in shaggy scales. As it matures, it becomes cylindrical, then becomes bell-shaped, and the cap ranges in colour from white to grey. In this shape, the margins of the cap are upturned, and are coloured black. The cap has the curious quality where, once it has fully matured, the cap liquefies into an inky substance, until there is no remnant of the cap save for a small black ring located at the top of the stem. The underside of the cap, contains gills that are crowded together and have a free attachment to the cap, with the same colour as the

surface of the cap. The gills too have the ability to deliquesce as the cap once matured. The spore print that can be obtained from the mushroom is dark brown in colour. The cap may measure 5-20 cm high and 2-6 cm wide.

Stem: The stem of the Shaggy Inkcap is white, and slender, that it resembles the stalk of an asparagus. A dissection of the interior of the stem would reveal that it has a hollow interior. The exterior of the stem is white and has a distinctive ring at the midpoint of the stem, stained dark by the spore deposits. It terminates at a slightly widened base. The ring on the stem is quite loose and may slip down. The stem may measure 10-35 cm long, and from 1-2 cm sometimes 3 cm wide.

Look-Alike Species: There are no poisonous look-alike species for the Shaggy Inkcap. The species that is within the same family of mushrooms, the Common Inkcap looks vastly different from this mushroom that one cannot mistake it for the Shaggy Inkcap. Smaller inkcaps have the tendency to grow only on manure heaps, and the Magpie Inkcap has a different colour of the cap when compared to the Shaggy Inkcap.

Warning: The forager would have to note that this mushroom would have to be peeled before it can be cooked. One would have to take account the tendency of the mushroom to liquefy as they cook, and prepare themselves for the scent.

The Shaggy Inkcap has the curious tendency to liquefy into an inky substance once it reaches maturity, and this is the quality that the forager should keep an eye out for, and a scent out for, as it does dissolve into a substance that can actually pass for ink. The gills and the margins of the cap tend to have this same ability to liquefy and this could aid in its identification. Now, one might ask why would anyone want to look for this mushroom, given its tendency to undergo liquefaction as it matures. It remains to be an edible species of mushroom, though cooks are advised to be well aware of its potential to add to the volume of liquid once it begins to cook. It is advised that the caps be peeled first before they are cooked. They may be sauteed with a pat of butter for at least 5 to 10 minutes to complement their rather strong flavour. It does well when made into a filling for an omelette, as a basis for a soup, made into a casserole with a

cream base, or made into the wondrous condiment, mushroom ketchup. It is possible to eat the species raw, if and only if, it is found young and intact.

5.39 Saffron Milk Cap

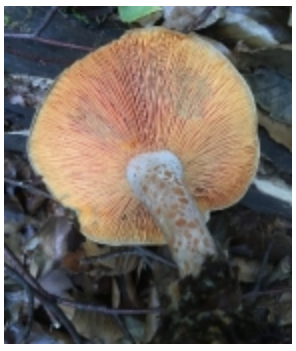
Common Name: Saffron Milk Cap

Scientific Name: Lactarius deliciosus

Seasonality: The forager may search for the mushroom only within the fall months, though some foragers may find it as early as the late summer months.

Location: The mushroom prefers to grow close to pine trees, where it has the tendency to grow beneath two-needled pine trees such as the Scots Pine. It has a widespread distribution throughout the British Isles.

Growth: The fruiting bodies of the Saffron Milk Cap only grow in troops of the same mushroom.



Cap: The cap of the Saffron Milk Cap starts off as a convex shaped cap, that gradually flattens once it begins to mature, and then becomes funnel shaped once fully matured. The margin of the cap starts off as inrolled. The cap of the mushroom has a blotchy, stained appearance, and is also covered in concentric rings that are coloured brownish orange. The orange skin of

the cap once bruised discolours into a grey green similar to that of a pistachio nut in colour. The cap once wet, can be slightly sticky to the touch. The flesh of the cap is a pale-yellow orange, that darkens toward the surface, and has a lighter centre. The underside of the cap shows gills that are of the same brownish orange as the cap, that are crowded together, and with a slightly decurrent attachment to the stem. The spore print yielded by the cap is pale yellow to white. The cap has a spicy, fruity aroma, and may measure 5-15 cm wide. The cap exudes an orange milk-like substance, from which it derives its genera as a milk cap.

Stem: The stem of the Saffron Milk Cap is a pale orange colour peppered with dark depressions on its exterior. The interior of the stem however, is similar to the flesh of the cap, with a darker surface and a lighter centre. The stem is stout and cylindrical in shape, though some stems tend to taper towards the base. The depressions on the stem may develop into cavities. The stem measures 3-7 cm long, and 1-3 cm wide.

Look-Alike Species: The Saffron Milk Cap has a look alike species known as the False Saffron Milk Cap. Where the Saffron Milk Cap has a particular preference for two-needled pines, the forager can make the distinction as the False Saffron Milk Cap tends to grow beneath Spruce Trees. The Lactarius salmonicolor is another look alike species, which the forager can distinguish from the Saffron Milk Cap as the L. salmonicolor species prefers to grow beneath fir trees instead. The Carrot Milk Cap has a darker cap compared to the Saffron Milk Cap, and it can grow with any type of coniferous tree. All of the species mentioned however, are edible, with due question only as to their palatability, as some of the mushrooms have an intensely bitter flavour, or a texture that deters the forager from its consumption. In either case, the Saffron Milk Cap and the Bloody Milk Cap are among the more favoured of the species in this genus of mushrooms.

Warning: Blanch the mushroom before it is used in any culinary application. The mushroom tends to be a favoured food source for insect larvae, so one should keep an eye out for possible infestations within the flesh of the mushroom.

The Saffron Milk Cap is one of the more highly favoured of its species in its entire genus, as it is the one that has been harvested extensively in the

British Isles once encountered. It is also one of the very few mushrooms that may be eaten raw, though there are some who might find a slight bitterness to its flavour. To remedy this, one simply has to blanch the mushrooms quickly, as the heat dissipates the bitter flavours that are in the flesh. Once cooked, there are several methods that can be used to bring out and complement the flavour of the mushroom. It may be fried either in butter, or in olive oil and garlic, but some cultures cannot agree on which is the proper method to cook the mushroom, but as this is a matter of cultural interpretation. It may be served as mushrooms on toast, as a component of egg-based dishes where it does really well in a soft scramble; or may be used to top pizzas if one has the ingredients or the dough prepared beforehand. Milk Caps such as the Saffron Milk Cap may be preserved in salt, though the liquid should be changed as the liquid exuded by the flesh of the Milk Cap may alter the quality of preservation. They also make excellent additions to add body to cream based sauces, and be served alongside poultry as a ragout.

5.40 Blushing Mushroom

Common Name: Red-Staining Mushroom; Blushing Mushroom; Scaly Wood Mushroom

Scientific Name: Agaricus silvaticus

Seasonality: The forager may search for the mushroom only within the fall months, though some foragers may find it as early as the summer months.

Location: The

mushroom prefers to grow in the woodlands and forests, where it has a preference for substrates derived from the fallen needles of pine trees, and other softwood or coniferous debris in the forests, plantations and parklands. It may also be found on the mulch made from woodchips. It has a widespread presence in Europe.

Growth: The fruiting bodies of the Blushing Mushroom tend to grow in troops or rings.

Cap: The cap of the Blushing Mushroom starts off as a convex cap, but gradually becomes flatter as it matures. It may also develop a broad umbo, though the appearance of the cap, once fully matured is very variable and would be difficult to describe. The texture of the cap may range from smooth to scaly, and have a colour from white to brown or a dark brown. The scales of the cap radiate from the centre. The flesh of the cap is white but stains or discolours to red upon exposure to air. The underside of the

cap would reveal gills that are pale-grey that gradually lighten to a rose pink in colour, then darken into a chocolate brown colour. They are densely packed and have a free attachment to the stem. The spore print yielded by the cap is brown. The cap has a mild aroma and may measure 5-10 cm wide.

Stem: The stem of the Blushing Mushroom is pale brown in colour, and may be covered in brown, fibrous scales. The stem may be tinged with the same colour as the cap. There is a hanging ring at the midpoint of the stem. The stem of the mushroom is stout and tends to taper upwards. It tends to bruise red below the hanging ring. The fleshy interior is white, but turns or discolours red upon exposure to air, or once cut.

Look-Alike Species: There is some specialized equipment needed to help distinguish the Blushing Mushroom from other similar mushrooms. The Scaly Wood Mushroom (Agaricus langei) is virtually indistinguishable from the Blushing Mushroom, save for the use of microscopy which enables the forager to distinguish the minute details, as with the Agaricus haemorrhoidarius. The distinction that can be made however, is that the flesh of these two species tends to discolour red faster than the Blushing Mushroom, so one can take a cue from the moniker and wait for the mushroom to either blush or simply rapidly turn red, though there are no parameters for the time. The peculiar characteristic of discolouration is also a key factor to distinguish the mushroom from the Amanita species which are known to be the deadlier of mushroom species. The Blushing Mushroom however, may be confused with the Inky Mushroom and the Agaricus phaeolepidotus, both of which smell heavily of phenols or ink, and discolour yellow rather than red.

Warning: Simply clean the mushrooms well before any use.

Despite the discolouration of the name, the Blushing Mushroom shares similar qualities with the Field Mushroom, and both mushrooms in turn belong to the same family as the more cultivated mushrooms. If one does desire to preserve the mushrooms, they do well as a dried species, though they may also be pickled, be preserved in a confit or oil, or cooked first in a desired method of preparation before they are frozen. The more conventional cook can actually utilize the mushroom in the same way as a

field mushroom, and thus one can also use this mushroom in the same method as any recipe that calls for the use of a cultivated mushroom.

5.41 The Prince

Common Name: The Prince

Scientific Name:

Agaricus augustus

Seasonality: The forager may search for the mushroom only within the summer to fall months.

Location: The mushroom prefers to grow on soil that is rich with nutrients, in all the types of forests and parklands, and oftentimes in garden compost as a preferred substrate. It may also be found along the roadsides, and in the grassy areas of gardens and parks. It has a widespread distribution throughout Europe.

Growth: The fruiting bodies of the Prince tend to grow as a few mushrooms close together, or in large troops.

Cap: The cap of the Prince starts off as a bun shape or hemispherical in shape, but is more often found with a flatter top. The cap of the mushroom is covered in irregularly shaped yet concentric rings of fibrous orange to brown scales. As it matures, the cap gradually flattens more and is covered in more of the scales, and it is always darker in the centre of the cap. The margins of the cap are covered in the remnants of the veil from which the mushroom developed. The flesh of the mushroom and the cap is white, and does not discolour once cut or exposed to air. It may however, turn slightly

red in colour as the mushroom matures. The underside of the cap would reveal gills that start off as white, then darken to grey, then reddish-pink then to brown. The cream to brown gills has a white edge and are crowded together and have a free attachment, and yield a brown to chocolate brown spore print. The cap may measure 8-15 cm but some specimens may reach up to 20 cm wide. The cap of the mushroom and the mushroom itself has a scent of bitter almonds.

Stem: The stem of the Prince, is quite fleshy and turns a pink-brown as it moves to the base of the mushroom. The flesh of the stem however, is whitish but stains yellow upon exposure to air. It is quite dark and thicker at the base, but becomes whiter and smoother in texture after the persistent ring, which serves as a demarcation for the change in appearance. The stem may measure 7-12 cm long, but some specimens are known to reach 20 cm in length; and 1.5-3.5 cm wide.

Look-Alike Species: The Prince has the same similar species to the Blushing Mushroom, however, where one utilizes sight in the previous mushroom, the forager would need to have a keen sense of smell to discern the bitter almond scent that characterizes the Prince from other mushrooms. The Scaly Wood Mushroom (Agaricus langei) and the Agaricus haemorrhoidarius. The distinction that can be made is that these have a stronger scent compared to the bitter almond scent of the Prince. The Prince may be confused with the Inky Mushroom and the Agaricus phaeolepidotus, both of which smell heavily of phenols or ink, rather than the Bitter Almond scent of the Prince. Dapperlings may be confused with the Prince, however they have white gills as opposed to the brown gills of the Prince, and have an unpleasant scent.

Warning: Simply clean the mushrooms well before any use.

There is nothing Machiavellian about this mushroom, though admittedly the scent of Bitter Almonds that lingers upon this mushroom tends to make it stand out from most mushrooms, that is, if one is familiar with the scent. The forager then should use this quality to distinguish the Prince from other similar mushrooms. The Prince, given its superior quality has a strong flavour, that is quite pleasant and is a mix of mushrooms and almonds, and thus lends itself well to most mushroom dishes that call for the use of

Cultivated Mushrooms. For its superior flavour profile, the Prince is a mushroom considered to be the best member of the *Agaricus* family of mushrooms. As with the Agaricus mushrooms it may also be preserved once it has been cooked. The mushroom can be frozen once cooked and thawed for later use. They may also be dried, pickled, preserved as part of a confit in oil or some fat. One would have to take some precautions however, as some people have exhibited characteristics where they have shown some allergic reactions to the compounds in the Agaricus family of mushrooms. Those with allergies to almonds should then exercise caution in the consumption of this mushroom.

5.42 Bay Bolete

Common Name: Bay Bolete

Scientific Name: Imleria badia (syn. Boletus badius)

Seasonality: The forager may search for the mushroom as early as the late summer months to the late fall months.

Location: The mushroom prefers to grow as much as possible in plantations (replanted trees), or forests that are predominantly populated by pine trees; however, foragers have encountered this mushroom beneath hardwood or deciduous trees, and beneath Norway Spruce Trees. It may also be found beneath beech trees, where the mushroom has a preference for acidic soils, or soils with a neutral pH. It has a widespread distribution and is very common in the British Isles.

Growth: The fruiting bodies of the Bay Bolete may be found on their own, or in scattered groups in the forests.

Cap: The cap of the Bay Bolete is initially hemispherical or bun-shaped in appearance, but later becomes convex, and then flattens as it matures. The texture of the cap is initially downy before it smoothens, but when wet, the texture becomes sticky. When dry however, the texture of the cap tends to be greasy. The colour of the cap ranges from dark chestnut brown to a dark brown. The flesh of the cap, is white, but discolours blue above the tubes once it is cut into. The underside of the cap would reveal yellow, sinuate tubes that bruise a green blue, that terminate into medium-sized pores. The

pores are initially round and cream but later mature into angular and olive-coloured pores that bruise a dark blue. The cap has a strong, distinct scent, and may measure 4-15 cm wide.

Stem: The stem of the Bay Bolete is a paler chestnut brown compared to the cap, and is streaked with brown, but does not have the same net-like pattern that the Penny Bun has on its stem. The interior of the stem is fleshy and white, but stains blue around the pores of the cap. It may measure 4-12 cm long, and 1-4 cm wide.

Look-Alike Species: The forager would not have a hard time with the identification of the Bay Bolete as though it resembles other species of the Bolete family, the distinct colour change where the flesh of the mushroom or the gills stain blue once pressed, will immediately alert the forager that what they have is the Bay Bolete, and not the Penny Bun.

Warning: Simply clean the mushrooms well before any use.

Unlike the Penny Bun whose appeal is generally renowned amongst most mushroom connoisseurs, the Bay Bolete is a less flavourful mushroom by comparison whose flavour profile leans more towards an acquired taste for the mushroom itself. Despite the comparisons however, the flavour of the mushroom does greatly complement any game meats that it gets paired with. The texture of the mushroom stands up well when it is pickled, and it is one of the few mushrooms that may be used in a raw application, provided that one is able to slice the mushrooms thinly. Alternatively, the caps of the mushroom may be used to top crostini or be lightly battered and fried as an appetizer or entrée.

5.43 Larch Bolete

Common Name: Larch Bolete

Scientific Name: Suillus grevillei (syn. Suillus elegans)

Seasonality: The forager may search for the mushroom as early as the late summer months to the middle fall months.

Location: The mushroom prefers to grow around Larch Trees, which the forager may retain as an important characteristic in its identification. The forager may find the mushroom on the grass, or on the leaf litter that has fallen from larch trees, in the forests, plantations, and in the gardens.

Growth: The fruiting bodies of the Larch Bolete may be found only in troops.

Cap: The cap of the Larch Bolete is initially hemispherical, before it becomes convex, then flattens as it matures. It has a slimy texture if wet, but becomes sticky if dry. The colour of the cap ranges between yellow to brown, but may also be yellow to yellow orange. The flesh of the cap is

pale yellow in colour, and is firm at first but softens as it matures. The underside of the cap would reveal short, pale-yellow tubes with a decurrent attachment that terminate in pale yellow, angular pores that discolour to brown if bruised. The mushroom has a faint, pleasant aroma that resembles crushed geraniums, and measures 5-10 cm though some specimens are known to reach 18 cm wide.

Stem: The stem of the Larch Bolete is just as vividly coloured as the cap of the mushroom, a yellow-orange in colour, and with a pale-yellow interior that is firm while young, but softens as it matures. The stem has a prominent ring, near the top, which is slimy to the touch. The stem is cylindrical and slender, but swollen at the base at times, and is darker in colour at the base of the stem. It can measure 4-10 cm long though some specimens can measure up to 20 cm long, and 1-2.5 cm wide.

Look-Alike Species: Because of the unique relationship this mushroom has with larch trees, the forager would be able to easily identify this mushroom. In addition to this, it has no poisonous look alike species. The Suillus bresadolae var. flavogriseus, or the Bearded Bolete is a very rare species that bears the closest resemblance to the Larch Bolete.

Warning: There are some individuals who have shown a marked sensitivity to the mushroom, as the slimy texture may induce some gastrointestinal responses. It is advised that one peel off the cap to ensure that the flesh does not soften and become slimy.

The vivid colour of the Larch Bolete would enable the forager to readily keep an eye out for it, particularly if they are aware of the presence of Larch trees, with which the mushroom seems to have a mycorrhizal relationship with, and is the key identifier that assures the forager that this is the Larch Bolete and not some other similar bolete species. That aside, the flesh of the mushroom is a pale-yellow colour, that softens as it matures, and it has a mild flavour, that lends itself well to mushrooms on toast, or lightly tossed with a balsamic vinaigrette.

5.44 Common Puffball

Common Name: Common Puffball

Scientific Name: Lycoperdon perlatum

Seasonality: The forager may search for the mushroom in the summer to late fall months.

Location: The mushroom prefers to grow on soils, mostly in the forests, though the forager may also find this mushroom in the grasslands.

Growth: The Common Puffball prefers to grow in dense clusters, small groups with other Common Puffballs, but the forager may also find them alone.

Cap: The Common Puffball is not as large as the Giant Puffball; it is relatively minuscule by comparison. While not a cap per se, as the body of the Puffball is the most predominant part of the mushroom, it does resemble a pear-shaped ball or mass, covered in wart like protuberances or pearls, that readily detach from the surface of the body to form a net like pattern on the surface of the cap. The colour of the mushroom is initially white but darkens to brown as it matures. The interior of the mushroom is cream to white but darkens with age. The fruit body measures 4-7 cm in height, but may be as small as 2 cm; and as tall as 9 cm. It may also be 2-4 cm wide.

Stem: The Common Puffball has a short, white stem, that can be at least distinguished from the remainder of the fruit body. The stem tends to be

well developed for a puffball, and is sterile in its interior, with a white flesh, that is firm and spongy.

Look-Alike Species: The Common Puffball may be mistaken for other Earthball Mushrooms or the Dusky Puffball, which is a toxic mushroom. One should keep an eye for the darker stem.

Warning: There are no specific warnings as to the consumption and harvest of the Common Puffball. As for puffballs in general, it is recommended that they only be consumed if the flesh is still a pure white and firm. Otherwise, consumption of discoloured flesh would result in gastrointestinal symptoms. Do not pick puffballs from polluted areas as it can take in heavy metals.

This is a good mushroom for a beginner forager, but one should exercise caution as to its harvest, as the mushroom does readily take in heavy metals such as lead and mercury, and if these mushrooms are located near such areas where heavy metals or pollutants may be found, they should be avoided completely. Unlike most puffballs, the Common Puffball has a short stem that one can easily identify. It is a mushroom that does not dry well, but once they are cooked, then they may be frozen. The puffballs, however, are at their best when cooked and eaten while they are fresh, and are at their best flavour when fried. They may be paired with an egg dish such as omelettes or dipped in a light batter and fried.

5.45 Trumpet Chanterelle

Common Name: Trumpet Chanterelle; Winter Chanterelle; Chanterelle (French); Yellowleg (American English)

Scientific Name: Cantharellus tubaeformis

Seasonality: The forager may search for the Trumpet Chanterelle from the middle of the fall months to the mid-winter season.

Location: The mushroom prefers to grow beneath coniferous or deciduous trees, where it has a particular preference for moss-rich forests of spruce or in plantations. The forager may also find this mushroom in coniferous forests that are rich in bracken or large amounts of woody debris from the tree. It is a mushroom that is frequently found throughout the British Isles, where it grows well in south-east England, and in the Scottish Highlands.

Growth: The Winter Chanterelle mushroom tends to grow in large troops with other Winter Chanterelle mushrooms.

Cap: The cap of the Winter Chanterelle mushroom is initially dome or bun-shaped while young, but begins to take on a funnel shape once it begins to mature and has a velvety texture. The margins of the cap, are irregularly shaped but wavy in appearance. The colour of the cap ranges from dark-brown to a mix of brown, yellow and grey. The flesh of the cap is quite thin in its constitution. The underside of the cap, would reveal wrinkled and forked , grey veins that are distant to each other and have a decurrent attachment to the stem. The spore print yielded by the mushroom is a pale

yellow. The cap of the mushroom is faintly pleasant and has a fruity or spicy character. It may measure 1-6 cm wide.

Stem: The stem of the Winter Chanterelle mushroom is coloured a bright yellow, which gradually fades away to a dull yellow at the base. It is tubular in appearance, and the veins on the underside of the cap have a decurrent attachment to the stem. The stem may sometimes be flattened or grooved on its surface. The stem may measure 3-8 cm long and 0.3-0.8 cm wide.

Look-Alike Species: There are several species within the genera of the Chanterelles that may be mistaken for the Winter Chanterelle Mushroom, however, the other relatives in this genus of mushrooms are just as edible as the Winter Chanterelle, so the forager would at least be able to enjoy those mushrooms. The Jelly Babies (Leotia lubrica) is a fungus however, that shares the same choice of substrate with the Winter Chanterelle. It differs in that it has no gills on its underside, and it is not poisonous. There are doubts as to its palatability or edibility however.

Warning: The forager should carefully harvest the mushrooms, as though they grow in abundance, they should be thoroughly examined to ensure that they are free of any debris attached to them as they do enjoy the substrate of woody debris.

While not as visually spectacular as the Chanterelle mushroom that one is accustomed to, the Winter Chanterelle has its own unique characteristics that make it a desirable mushroom for the forager, especially as it is one of the few that may be found in the winter months. The flavour of the Winter Chanterelle is mild, and it does extraordinarily well with pasta dishes and adds a special flavour when used in a Bolognese sauce. With this in mind, it comes to no surprise that they also become a favoured ingredient to add savouriness to soups and stews. It makes an excellent companion for partridges and other game birds, and does well when used as a garnish for pates. The mushroom is of sufficiently pleasant flavour that they may be used in lieu of cultivated mushrooms in the traditional English Breakfast, or simply served on toast. They may also be finely chopped and folded into a mash, be it potato or squash. They also make an excellent basis for a mushroom risotto. To preserve them, it is possible to pickle the Winter Chanterelle as they are sufficiently resilient enough to withstand the

pickling process. To do so, the Winter Chanterelle must be first fried off in olive oil to ensure that the excess water in the body evaporates. Once it has done so, let cool, and season with salt and pepper. Add chives and a splash of balsamic vinegar, enough to cover the mushrooms. The mushrooms in this state are best served cold.

5.46 Oyster Mushrooms

Common Name: Oyster Mushroom

Scientific Name: Pleurotus ostreatus

Seasonality: The forager may search for the Oyster Mushroom in the fall to winter months, though it is one of the mushrooms that may be found by the forager all year, but peaks in the winter months.

Location: The mushroom prefers to grow on hardwood logs or trees that are either dead, or in a state of decay. It is rarely found in softwood or coniferous trees, but may still be found on occasion. It may also be found on timber that has been worked on. It is a mushroom that enjoys a widespread distribution throughout Europe.

Growth: The Oyster Mushroom tends to grow on trees and logs arranged in rows or tiers of other oyster mushrooms.

Cap: The cap of the Oyster Mushroom ranges in colour from brown to dark blue-grey. The cap is initially shaped like a shell, but as it matures, it gradually flattens, and has a smooth texture. The underside of the cap would reveal white gills that darken to a cream colour, crowded together with a decurrent attachment to the stem. The mushroom yields a lilac spore print. The flesh of the mushroom is white and tough, and has a mild scent evocative of mushrooms. It may measure 6-20 cm wide.

Stem: The stem of the Oyster Mushroom is white, and has a woolly base, from which other oyster mushroom caps stem from. The stem is positioned at the margins of the cap of the mushroom, and may either be very short or simply absent from the mushroom body itself. The stem measures 0-5 cm high, and 1-2 cm wide.

Look-Alike Species: The oyster mushroom may be confused with other mushrooms in the Pleurotus genus; however, all of these are edible, and the forager need not worry. There are mushrooms however from the Crepidotus; Panus and Panellus genera that are similar in appearance and have a dubious edibility, where other foragers may also dispute as to whether these mushrooms may be safely eaten, but otherwise, these too, are not dangerous. Angel's Wings are mushrooms that may possibly be toxic, but these are smaller in size, fragile and pure white in colour as opposed to the Oyster Mushroom. The Oyster Rollrim (Tapinella panuoides) may possibly be poisonous and should be avoided. It is a rare mushroom, that may be distinguished from the Oyster mushroom as it has a drab brown colour, and a yellow-brown spore print, rather than the Lilac of the Oyster Mushroom.

Warning: The forager should carefully clean the mushrooms to ensure that they are free of any debris attached to them as they do enjoy the substrate of woody debris from the logs on which they grow on.

The Oyster Mushroom is perhaps one of the more familiar mushrooms that a forager can encounter as not only are these available in cultivated form, but are also readily found in the wild, where the wilder versions have a more superior flavour as opposed to the more cultivated ones. The flavour of the Oyster Mushroom is rather mild, and it does well when incorporated into stir-fries as it takes on flavours from different sauces rather well. It may

also be simply sauteed with a garlic butter, but a more sublime culinary application of this mushroom is to either batter with a light tempura batter, or one of flour and breadcrumbs, and deep-fry for a really wonderful vegan tempura. The mushroom does contain a wonderful pharmaceutical property, in that it contains lovastatin, a compound that lowers cholesterol in the bloodstream.

5.47 Stump Puffball

Common Name: Stump Puffball

Scientific Name: Lycoperdon pyriforme

Seasonality: The forager may search for the mushroom in the fall to winter months, though some foragers may encounter it as early as the summer months where they may be harvested until the end of the fall months.

Location: The mushroom prefers to grow on rotten hardwood, and on occasion rotten softwood or coniferous trees, where it may be found in the forests, parks and gardens. It only grows on rotten wood, so the forager should keep an eye out for this important characteristic. It is a very common mushroom in the British Isles.

Growth: The Stump Puffball prefers to grow in dense clusters or small groups with other Stump Puffballs.

Cap: The Stump Puffball is beige in colour, tall and pear-shaped, and younger specimens have spines. The texture of the Stump Puffball is initially grainy but becomes smooth afterwards. The interior of the flesh is white and firm. The fruiting body of the mushroom measure 1.5-6 cm high and 1-2.5 cm wide. It has an olive-brown spore print.

Stem: The Stump Puffball has no visible stem, as the mushroom is predominantly the fruiting body.

Look-Alike Species: There are no similar look-alike species for the Stump Puffball. It is the only puffball species that grows on wooden substrates.

Warning: There are no specific warnings as to the consumption and harvest of the Stump Puffball. As for puffballs in general, it is recommended that they only be consumed if the flesh is still a pure white and firm. Otherwise, consumption of discoloured flesh would result in gastrointestinal symptoms. Do not pick puffballs from polluted areas as it can take in heavy metals.

The only remark that can be made as to this puffball is that it becomes quite tough once the mushroom reaches maturation. It may only be consumed by the forager when the mushroom body is quite small. They may be cooked and then frozen for later consumption, and are great when fried or integrated into egg dishes. The puffballs of this size should always be cooked and never eaten raw.

5.48 Velvet Shank

Common Name: Velvet Shank, Enokitake (Japanese)

Scientific Name: Flammulina velutipes

Seasonality: The forager may search for the mushroom in late autumn to winter months, though some foragers may find until the early spring months.

Location: The mushroom prefers to grow on weakened trees, that are still alive, where it has a preference for elm, willow or poplar trees. It is rarely found on coniferous trees. It may also be found on deciduous shrubs. The mushroom has a widespread distribution throughout Europe.

Growth: The Velvet Shank is only found in dense clusters.

Cap: The Velvet Shank has an initially convex cap, that flattens and becomes umbonate in shape as it matures. The cap may range in colour from orange to orange-brown in colour with pale yellow margins, and a dark brown centre. The texture of the cap is smooth, but once wet it becomes greasy to the touch. The flesh of the cap is light brown in colour and thin and tough in texture. The underside of the cap is white but darkens to a grey-yellow colour, and are crowded together. They have an adnate to emarginate attachment to the cap, and yield a white spore print. The scent of the cap is mild and pleasant. The cap may measure 1-6 cm wide but some specimens may reach up to 10 cm wide.

Stem: The Velvet Shank has a very tough, curved or flattened stem, that is yellowish at the top, and tapers to a velvety dark brown colour. It may measure 2-7 cm long but some specimens may reach up to 10 cm long; and 0.3-1 cm wide.

Look-Alike Species: The difficulty in the identification of the species is determinant on the season where the forager looks for this mushroom. At the end of the fall months, when the Velvet Shank begins to fruit, there are other reddish-brown fungi that grow on decomposed wood that the forager may also find. The Funeral Bell is a mushroom that may be mistaken for the Velvet Shank, though the Velvet Shank has a slimier texture if wet, and the stem of the Velvet Shank is tougher and has no ring. Once the season transitions to winter, all of the other species that may be mistaken for the Velvet Shank disappear, and makes this mushroom easier to identify. Flammulina elastica is a similar mushroom to the Velvet Shank, and is at least edible.

Warning: The forager should not eat the stems of the Wild Velvet Shank or Enokitake as these are mildly poisonous when raw. This is one of the very few mushrooms that are resilient enough to withstand the first frosts of winter, and make it easier for the forager to locate and identify. It prefers to thrive more in the lower temperatures of the winter, where the orange-brown colour of the cap and the dark brown stem contrast with the snows of winter. That aside, one might be puzzled with the fact that this is a mushroom that is one with the enoki mushroom, despite the variance in colour. The enoki mushrooms that one sees in the grocery are pale white and elongated in shape, produced from their cultivation in canisters that are pumped with carbon dioxide, and grown in darkness to ensure that these mushrooms are pure white in colour. Like the cultivated enoki, the Velvet

Shank is best used in soups and stews, though one may be adventurous enough to tempura batter these and fry lightly. Never eat the stems of the Velvet Shank raw as these are mildly poisonous.

6 CONCLUSION

There are a wide variety of mushrooms that may be encountered by the forager everywhere in the British Isles. These mushrooms that have been listed here, are among the most commonly encountered by foragers and have been arranged in accordance with their seasonality, to ensure that the forager who reads this is able to know when these mushrooms are at their peak. While one might question the inclusion of some mushrooms, but the exclusion of more esoteric varieties such as the Russulas, these are because some of these mushrooms are located in severely limited areas such as the Scottish Highlands, and are absent in the remainder of the British Isles to be included in the pages of this book. Some species found in the British Isles may be found yes, but in accordance with the conservation of species, they are threatened or are close to extinction which is why they are not mentioned in this book. Subsequently, the mushrooms that have been chosen for inclusion in this book are those of a sufficiently abundant quantity that one does not have to worry about the potential harvest of a rare species of mushroom. These are mushrooms that are abundant enough, and have a widespread distribution throughout Great Britain, Ireland and the surrounding islands to ensure that the search for the mushrooms are worth the effort the forager exerts. It is key that these mushrooms be identified as to their individual characteristics to ensure that one chooses the right mushroom. These mushrooms vary in accordance with the skill level of the forager, and some like the Penny Bun are relatively easy to identify, and others require some additional effort such as the use of spore prints and microscopy to help in its identification. Others such as the Velvet Shank, simply require patience as winter would eliminate the other mushrooms that it may be confused with. That aside, the knowledge that one needs to attain to safely forage for mushrooms is not obtained overnight, as it takes years of experience and practice to be able to successfully forage and identify mushrooms by second nature. It is a learning process that benefits from constant usage, and while that happens, one can simply cook and preserve these mushrooms in accordance with the recommendations. More adventurous foragers can experiment with other mushrooms to show more flavourful combinations. While the forager can enjoy their excursions into the parks and woodlands, it is imperative that one be able to remember too,

the prerequisites of permission and authority to ensure that the journey for mushrooms remains free of issues; and that one always be aware of their environment to ensure that not only does one choose the choice mushrooms, but also to ensure that their own safety is never jeopardized. This is an activity that is best done with a companion, which makes it all the more pleasant.

7 BONUS

Scan the QR code below to be directed to a web page where you can access 9 incredible bonuses. After providing your email address, you will receive a printable calendar chart, 5 online courses and 6 mobile apps compatible with both Android and iPhone. Your participation and feedback are greatly appreciated!

LINK: https://BookHip.com/GSVJMKP

8 APPENDIX

8.1 Foraging Checklist

Before You Head Out:

- Identification Guides: Bring along a reliable field guide or mobile app for plant identification.
- Seasonal Knowledge: Know what plants are in season and what part of the plant is edible during that time.
- Legal Permissions: Check local laws and regulations about foraging in the area you are planning to go to.
- Local Foraging Ethics and Rules: Familiarize yourself with the ethics and unwritten rules of foraging in your area.
- Weather Forecast: Check the weather forecast for the day.
- Dress Appropriately: Wear long pants, sturdy shoes, and layers according to the weather.
- Backpack: Pack a lightweight backpack for carrying your finds.
- Collection Containers: Bring reusable containers or bags for collecting plants.
- Gardening Gloves: To protect your hands from thorns and irritants.
- Knife or Scissors: For cutting plant parts without harming the plant.
- Notebook and Pen: To make notes about the locations and characteristics of plants.
- Camera or Smartphone: To document the plants you find.
- First-Aid Kit: Include basic first-aid supplies.
- Water and Snacks: Stay hydrated and energized.
- Insect Repellent: To avoid insect bites.
- Sunscreen: To protect yourself from the sun.

While You Are Out:

- Positive Identification: Only collect plants that you can positively identify as edible.
- Sustainable Harvesting: Don’t overharvest. Follow the rule of thirds: leave one-third for nature, one-third for other foragers, and take one-third for yourself.

- Respect Wildlife: Be aware of the local wildlife and maintain a safe distance.
- Tread Lightly: Stick to trails and avoid trampling on vegetation.
- No Trespassing: Respect private properties and do not enter without permission.
- Clean as You Go: Pick up any trash you see, even if it’s not yours.

When You Get Home:

- Clean Your Finds: Gently clean your foraged items.
- Proper Storage: Store them appropriately for freshness.
- Journal Your Experience: Note what you found, where you found it, and any observations.
- Plan Your Next Forage: Use what you learned to plan your next foraging adventure.

Remember to always forage responsibly and sustainably to protect the environment and ensure that these natural resources will be available for future generations.

8.2 Glossary of Terms

- **Annual:** A plant that completes its life cycle in one year or growing season.
- **Biennial:** A plant that completes its life cycle in two years or growing seasons, usually producing leaves in the first year and flowering in the second.
- **Botanical Name:** The scientific name of a plant, consisting of the genus followed by the species.
- **Bulb:** A storage organ, usually underground, consisting of a short stem with fleshy leaves or leaf bases (e.g. onions).
- **Corm:** A rounded underground storage organ consisting of a swollen stem base covered with scale leaves.
- **Cultivar:** A cultivated variety of a plant that has been selectively bred for specific traits.
- **Deciduous:** Plants that shed their leaves at the end of the growing season.
- **Dioecious:** Plants in which male and female reproductive structures are on separate individuals.
- **Edible Parts:** The portions of a plant that can be consumed safely.
- **Evergreen:** Plants that retain their leaves throughout the year.
- **Foraging:** The act of searching for and collecting food resources in the wild.
- **Genus (plural: genera):** A classification ranking above species, grouping together species with similar characteristics.
- **Herbaceous:** Plants with green, non-woody stems.
- **Hybrid:** A plant resulting from a cross between two different species or cultivars.
- **Indigenous:** Plants that are native to a particular region or ecosystem.
- **Invasive Species:** Non-native plants that spread rapidly and can cause harm to the local ecosystem.
- **Leaf Axil:** The angle between a leaf and the stem from which it grows.
- **Monoecious:** Plants that have both male and female reproductive structures on the same individual.
- **Native Species:** A species that has naturally evolved in a particular region or environment.

- **Perennial:** A plant that lives for more than two years or growing seasons.
- **Petiole:** The stalk that attaches a leaf to the stem.
- **Photosynthesis:** The process by which plants use sunlight to synthesize foods with the aid of chlorophyll.
- **Pollination:** The transfer of pollen from the male part of a flower to the female part, leading to fertilization and seed production.
- **Rhizome:** A horizontal, underground stem that often serves as a storage organ and can produce roots and shoots.
- **Rootstock:** The underground part of a plant, especially when used as a stock for grafting.
- **Species:** The basic unit of classification, grouping together individuals that can breed with one another.
- **Succulent:** A plant with fleshy tissues that store water, such as cacti.
- **Taproot:** The main root of a plant that grows straight down and from which smaller lateral roots emerge.
- **Tuber:** A swollen, usually underground stem or root, used by the plant to store nutrients (e.g. potatoes).
- **Wildcrafting:** The practice of harvesting plants from their natural habitat, typically for medicinal or culinary use.